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A History of Eastern Europe

Course Guidebook

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Professor Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius was born in Chicago, Illinois. He grew up on Chicago's South Side in a Lithuanian American neighborhood and spent some years attending school in Aarhus, Denmark, and Bonn, Germany. He received his B.A. from the University of Chicago. In 1989, he spent the summer in Moscow and Leningrad

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After receiving his doctorate, Professor Liulevicius spent a year as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University. Since 1995, he has been a history professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He teaches courses on modern European history, international history, World War I, 20th-century Europe, and diplomatic history. In 2014, he received the University of Tennessee's Excellence in Graduate Mentoring and Advising Award. He also has won both of the university's top teaching awards: the Provost's Excellence in Teaching Award in 2003 and the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2012. In 2005, he was awarded a prestigious National Endowment for the Humanities Research Fellowship. He currently serves as Director of the Center for the Study of War and Society at the University of Tennessee. He also serves as

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Professor Liulevicius's research focuses on German relations with Eastern Europe in the modern period. His other interests include international history and the history of the Baltic region. He has published numerous articles (which have also appeared in French, Italian, and German translations), and his first book, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I*, also appeared in German translation in 2002. His second book is a study of German stereotypes of Eastern Europeans and ideas of a special German cultural mission in the East over the past two centuries, entitled *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present*.

Professor Liulevicius has recorded six other Great Courses: *History's Greatest Voyages of Exploration*; *Turning Points in Modern History*; *Espionage and Covert Operations: A Global History*; *War, Peace, and Power: Diplomatic History of Europe, 1500–2000*; *World War I: The "Great War"*; and *Utopia and Terror in the 20th Century*.

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A History of Eastern Europe

In spite of its strategically vital geopolitical location, Eastern Europe is still for many less known—it's often the “Other Europe.” This course reveals the modern history of Eastern Europe (sometimes also called East Central Europe). The course provides an in-depth treatment of the political, social, and cultural history of this region, which stretches from the Baltic states and Poland all the way to the Balkans and Bulgaria. This area includes some 20 countries, with a total population of around 180 million, and has been a crossroads of history, as it remains today.

Located historically between lands dominated by Germany and Russia, as well as the Austrian Habsburg and Ottoman empires, Eastern Europe was for ages a contested borderland between rival realms, countries, and dynasties. In the 20th century, the region was divided by Hitler and Stalin, then dominated by the Soviet Union for decades, until the fall of communism. Today it continues to undergo a turmoil-filled transition, with both economic growth and lingering problems and challenges.

This course illuminates why Eastern Europe has come to be associated with unwelcome stereotypes of instability, backwardness, Balkanization, and even lack of civilization. We trace how the concept of Eastern Europe often served as a kind of foil against which the West could define itself. Challenging these projections, this course examines what is in fact distinctive and different about Eastern Europe, while also identifying unexpected linkages with the West and the world at large that have been just as decisive. This course also mines an unusual historical source: political jokes, which Eastern Europe has produced aplenty, as a response to repression and danger.

The lectures begin with the prehistoric initial migrations of different peoples that first gave Eastern Europe its distinctive diversity, then cover the Middle Ages, which would be remembered later as a “golden age” by the people of several different countries. The course covers the destruction of Poland-Lithuania and the rise of nations and nationalism. We consider the impact of the First World War (which broke out because of a terrorist act in Bosnia) and, in its aftermath, the creation of modern states in the region that started as young democracies and then slid into dictatorship. The Second World War

was unleashed by a new program for partition, negotiated in the strange Nazi-Soviet Pact. The lectures consider the massive violence of the Second World War and in particular the Holocaust.

Our analysis then turns to the rapid Stalinization of Eastern Europe, and repeated resistance to that process. We examine the deeper dynamics behind the unexpected demise of Communism and the revolutions of 1989. While the transition was largely peaceful, it also involved the bloody wars of the Yugoslav succession. We bring the course to its conclusion with the enlargements of NATO and the European Union into the formerly Communist world, survey the ongoing crisis involving Ukraine and Russia, and ask whether Eastern Europe still exists today as a distinctive region and identity.

Ultimately, the history of Eastern Europe revealed here can teach hard but valuable lessons about human triumph, tragedy, and survival.

The Other Europe: Deep Roots of Diversity

LECTURE

1

The task of defining Eastern Europe is not a simple matter of getting out a map and drawing a line down the middle of Europe. Definitions of Eastern Europe vary, though it's usually considered to spread from Estonia in the north, at the Baltic Sea, to Bulgaria in the south, at the Black Sea. The region includes 20 or so countries, of tremendous diversity in language, ethnicity, religion, and history. This lecture sets out to identify those countries. It then discusses the geography of Eastern Europe, and closes by identifying four themes that define the history of the region.

Identifying the Countries

- ▶ Defining which countries actually form Eastern Europe is a contentious issue. Over the centuries, Eastern Europe has been a dangerous area. Eastern Europe's past conjures up images of economic backwardness, Communist repression, the Iron Curtain, and periods of intense fragmentation and violence.
- ▶ For Western Europe, Eastern Europe has functioned as a sort of foil to define themselves against. One example is Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, in which a fictional lawyer enters the Carpathian Mountains and an atmosphere of mystery, wildness, and backwardness.
- ▶ This course will follow a productive criterion of including those countries, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, which have been thought of as Eastern Europe because of politics and culture. This Eastern Europe is not small: At present, it includes some 180 million people.

- ▶ Beginning all the way in the north, we include the Baltic states. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania lie along the southern coasts of the Baltic Sea. To the south lies Belarus, whose independence is recent: The East Slavic Belarusians in earlier times were called White Russians or White Ruthenians.
- ▶ At the center of the belt of countries we consider is Poland, a country whose borders have shifted dramatically over the centuries, but whose identity showed remarkable durability in spite of these transformations.
- ▶ To the south lies the vast country of Ukraine, the largest country entirely inside of Europe. (Russia is larger, spanning the Eurasian landmass). Ukraine's very name speaks to the historical experience of Eastern Europe: It suggests "borderland" or "home region."
- ▶ Next come two countries, which for a time were linked: the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Czechs and Slovaks are both West Slavs, occupying a central position, landlocked.
- ▶ To their south lies Hungary, also landlocked, an old kingdom established by a people unrelated to their neighbors: the Magyars, as the Hungarians call themselves. These were once a nomadic warrior people who settled in Eastern Europe.
- ▶ To the southeast of Hungary stretches Romania, including Transylvania from the Carpathian Mountains to the warm waters of the Black Sea. Romanian is a Romance language, related to Latin, also spoken in the neighboring state of Moldova to the east, between Romania and Ukraine.
- ▶ Towards the Mediterranean Sea, we have at last reached southeastern Europe. First comes mountainous Slovenia, with access to the Adriatic coast. To its south (following the Adriatic coast) is Croatia, then Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then Montenegro. Here, South Slavic languages are spoken.

- ▶ Farther south along the Adriatic is Albania, a strip of coastland and then hugely steep mountain landscapes; indeed, 80 percent of Albania is mountains. The Albanian language is distinct from Slavic, and is also spoken in Kosovo. At the center of the Balkan Peninsula is the state of Serbia. To the south of Serbia and to the north of Greece is the Republic of Macedonia.
- ▶ To the east, with coasts along the Black Sea, is Bulgaria. Serbian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian are South Slavic languages. A smaller corner of Turkey is located in Europe with the Black Sea and the Mediterranean on either side, where Europe and Asia meet.
- ▶ At the center of this range of territories are two areas that have been drawn in to Eastern European history: Austria and the eastern parts of Germany. Austria was the home of the Habsburg dynasty, among the empires that contended for these lands. Eastern Germany not only played a long role in Eastern European history, but also, for decades after World War II, was incorporated into the Eastern Bloc, the Communist satellite states of the Soviet Union.
- ▶ Russia also plays a prominent role in Eastern European history. In fact, in the present day, Russia includes a small non-contiguous territory along the Baltic coast called Kaliningrad, once German territory.

The Geography

- ▶ The geography of Eastern Europe did much to shape its essence and historical trajectory. In terms of its physical geography, Eastern Europe can be divided into three larger elements or zones.
- ▶ To the north lies the vast and open geographic feature called the Great Northern European Plain, the extension of a great expanse stretching beyond to Eurasia, the steppes of Russia. It is a largely flat and level plain without many natural frontiers or boundaries beyond the Baltic Sea to the north and the Carpathian Mountains to the south. It is dotted with countless lakes and forests.



Danube River

- ▶ In the center lies the larger region of the Danube basin, the valley formed by the Danube River. The basin is a large plain of fertile soil stretching from the Bohemian Plateau to the west to the great arc of the Carpathian Mountains and the Transylvanian Plateau to the east. At the present-day border of Serbia and Romania, the Danube River cuts across the Carpathians, separating them from the Balkan Mountains.
- ▶ To the southeast, the Balkan Peninsula stretches out into the Mediterranean, with the Adriatic Sea to the west and the Aegean Sea to the east. The craggy landscapes of the Balkan Peninsula thus form a geographic area unto itself, dominated by the Balkan Mountains, which also stretch into Bulgaria and end at the Black Sea.

The Themes

- ▶ Four major themes define the history of Eastern Europe, into the present day. First, the essential historical character of Eastern Europe is its diversity, which brings both richness and challenges.
 - The diversity of Eastern Europe includes a multiplicity of peoples and population movements into the region—different branches of the Slavic peoples, the Baltic peoples, Bulgars, Hungarians (Magyars), Mongols, Jews, Roma (formerly called “Gypsies”), Turks, and Germans.
 - Eastern Europe also has diversity of religion, the result of earlier pagan traditions, missionary work among the Slavs bringing the Orthodox faith and Catholicism, the arrival of the Jews, the spread of Islam, the Protestant Reformation, and Jesuits bearing the Counter-Reformation. Such a patchwork produces places where multilingualism was not unusual, but the rule.
- ▶ The second key theme is the history of Eastern Europe’s constantly contested spaces. In these struggles, empires tried repeatedly to carve out territories or spheres of influence. In addition, local peoples sought strategies for survival and self-rule, and sometimes cooperation to make that happen. This makes for a complex and fascinating history.
 - Consider the case of Transylvania. In succession, it belonged to the ancient Roman Empire, then Hungary, then to Ottoman Turkey, then Hungary again, then Romania after World War I, then Hungary during the World War II, and then again to Romania. Such overlays of experience produce a texture to Eastern European history that is distinctive.
- ▶ The third key theme is that this historical experience has produced marked contrasts with Western Europe. Focusing on these disparities shows us a different perspective on events we think we know well.
 - The Enlightenment movement, both World Wars, and the Cold War all had different results and perceptions in Eastern Europe than Western Europe.

- Stalinist regimes imposed on the region after World War II sought to impose a new uniformity on the area, an attempt that ultimately failed. Eastern Europeans themselves reacted to these projections and formulated identities of their own. In particular, historical memory was mobilized to create alternative scenarios for the future, offering a vision of something better than the present.
- ▶ The fourth theme is the very flipside of the third, which stressed difference. Eastern Europe's history also shows amazing connections, with the West as well as global histories, far outside the region. This produces amazing mysteries:
 - When Napoleon tried to recapture Haiti in the Caribbean, why were Polish volunteers in the advance guard? How did the story, published by Upton Sinclair in 1906, about an ordinary Lithuanian worker in the stockyards of Chicago launch a new school of journalism and transform American government? During the global struggle of World War I, why was the brand new state of Czechoslovakia declared in downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania?
 - In World War II, as the Battle of Britain raged in the skies over London against the Nazis, why were Polish volunteer pilots again to the fore? How did a Hungarian inventor create the world's most popular toy? How did Eastern European dissidents reshape the understanding of what Europe itself meant, and announce a message of political liberation that they insisted was urgently needed in the West as well?

Approaching Eastern Europe

- ▶ We will pursue those themes, and the dramatic stories and remarkable individuals that make up the history of Eastern Europe, in coming lectures. We will begin by looking at ancient and medieval Eastern Europe, then the way in which the modern period opened with an international crime: the carving up of one country by surrounding empires. We will examine the growth of the powerful idea of Romantic nationalism, and how empires coped—or proved unable to cope—with this emotionally charged definition of ethnic identity.

- ▶ We will take a close look at Jewish life in the cities and villages, a crucial ingredient in the makeup of Eastern Europe. Next we will track how the First World War blew up the earlier borders and state structures of the region, and how hopeful young democracies mostly succumbed to authoritarian trends, turning into dictatorships.
- ▶ Then, in the lead-up to World War II, we will analyze how the mortal enemies Hitler and Stalin cooperated to divide Eastern Europe, until the Nazis invaded their partner, the Soviet Union. We will trace the vast tragedy and crime of the Holocaust, as the Nazis and local collaborators destroyed a vital part of Eastern Europe, its Jewish communities.
- ▶ Even the end of the Second World War did not bring peace to Eastern Europe, as mass expulsions of peoples continued, Stalinist Communist regimes were imposed with great speed, and even long-standing armed resistance finally was eliminated. We will examine what life turned out to be like in the so-called Eastern Bloc of Communist countries, and repeated attempts at revolts in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.
- ▶ We'll see how Yugoslavia broke away from the Soviet Union's control, how the independent trade union Solidarity in Poland challenged the state's monopoly, and how dissidents and ordinary people cooperated to peacefully topple the Berlin Wall and the regimes of Eastern Europe in 1989, and then the Soviet Union itself in 1991.
- ▶ We will examine the wrenching transitions of post-communism, how Yugoslavia disintegrated into devastating civil war, how other Eastern European countries sought integration into the rest of Europe, and the recent crisis in Ukraine and Crimea.
- ▶ And finally, by the last lecture, on current challenges facing Eastern Europe, we will bring our course up to the present day, when events in Eastern Europe are in the headlines. We will seek to answer whether Eastern Europe still exists today, as a unit shaped by commonalities of existence.

READINGS

Hupchick and Cox, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Eastern Europe*.

Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What images spring to mind first for you when you think of Eastern Europe?
- 2 What other regions in the world get stereotyped in the way that Eastern Europe does, and why?

Formative Migrations: Mongols to Germans

LECTURE

2

In the ancient and medieval periods, successive waves of peoples and faiths created the essential diversity of Eastern Europe. Some waves, like the Mongols, receded, but others came to stay. These waves determined Eastern Europe's earliest history, and their effects linger to this day. This lecture begins with a Mongol invasion and retreat, then traces the origins of many Eastern European peoples. It moves on to discuss how different religions affected the region, and closes with a look at German Crusades and movements throughout Eastern Europe.

Mongol Invasion and Retreat

- ▶ In the summer of 1241, Mongol armies crashed into Eastern Europe, coming across the steppes near the Great Northern European Plain. The Mongols, also known as Tartars, were acting under the orders of their supreme leader, Ogedei Khan. The warrior Subotai was their military strategist.
- ▶ To face them, a coalition army of otherwise opposed Christian knights from Poland and Germany came together. The Christian knights gathered to stop the Mongols at Liegnitz, in what is today western Poland. The result was a crushing Mongol victory.
- ▶ The very next day, hundreds of miles away, another Mongol spearhead invaded Hungary. Three-quarters of the kingdom was destroyed, and for a year there was essentially no government.
- ▶ After the Hungarian defeat, the glorious walled city of Vienna in Austria braced itself for the next attack. At this point, the future of Europe hung in the balance, with the key question being: Where would the Mongols attack next?

- ▶ But as 1241 turned to 1242, the Mongols did not attack westwards. Instead, they suddenly withdraw eastward, because of news of the death of Ogedei Khan. His death meant that the Mongol elite had to return to choose a new leader. Europe had been saved.
- ▶ What if the Mongols had not turned back? Their khan had given them orders to drive all the way to the Atlantic. A shattered Europe would mean no Renaissance, no global voyagers of exploration, no Enlightenment, no scientific revolution— none of the bases of modernity so familiar to us today.

Interaction with Eastern Europe

- ▶ In classical antiquity, when Greece was in its glory, the lands of Eastern Europe were only dimly known. But as classical civilization spread, interaction with Eastern Europe grew. The Illyrian people of the Balkans became the ancestors of Albanians today. As the Roman Empire spread eastward, it occupied the province of Dacia (today Romania). Although the Romans later retreated behind the Danube, they left Romance language and a cultural legacy prized by Romanians.
- ▶ Farther north, beyond the Roman frontiers, ran the Amber Road trade route, from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean. Amber is electrostatic, and our word for electricity comes from the Greek word for amber, *elektra*. Amber washes up on the shores of the Baltic and was a trade good prized in the ancient world.
- ▶ Up north, in the lands of amber, resided ancestors of the Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and ancient Prussians, all speaking old Baltic languages. Then, across the Great Northern European Plain came Germanic tribes, the bane of the Roman Empire. Nomadic Huns and Avars followed.
- ▶ In the 400s to the 600s, there increasingly appeared a large family of peoples: the Slavs. The Slavic tribes diverged from each other,

expanding west, east, and south. The West Slavs would become the Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks. The East Slavs would later become the Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians. The South Slavs include Serbs, Croatians, Slovenes, and Macedonians.

- ▶ Together, the Slavs are the largest language family in Europe. The name *Slav* derives from their word for *word*, meaning that they shared a common language. But there is also a tragic linguistic reality to note here: In many European languages, including English, the word *slave* comes from the ethnic name *Slav*, as these peoples were raided and enslaved by their neighbors, sold in markets of the Mediterranean world.
- ▶ Among those traders and raiders were the Vikings of Scandinavia. In 862, Rurik the Viking settled in the Slavic city of Novgorod. The growing power of this polity became the state of Rus, centered on Kiev in what is today Ukraine.
- ▶ Another wave: The Bulgars arrived from the steppes. These were Central Asian nomads, related to the Huns of earlier ages, and like them formidable warriors on horseback. In the territories southwest of the Black Sea, the Bulgarians conquered the local Slavs but then assimilated to their ways and culture.
- ▶ In 895 the Hungarians, or Magyars as they call themselves, came riding in from the Ural Mountains to the east. The Magyars settled in the Pannonian Plain inside the arc of the Carpathian Mountains, and from this base they terrified the rest of Europe. The name *Hungarian*, which was given to them by others in the region, recalled the similarly frightening Huns.
- ▶ Incidentally, Magyar settlement in Hungary drove a wedge between the South Slavs and the East and West Slavs. Magyar raids finally were stopped by concerted resistance, and they settled down into what is Hungary today. Their king Saint Stephen accepted Christianity in 1001 and built a large kingdom that incorporated non-Magyar lands, including Slovakia, Transylvania, and Croatia.

Monument to Cyril and Methodius



Religion's Effects

- ▶ The spread of Christianity had political implications. It carried with it church organization and the establishment of states.
- ▶ To expand their faith and their influence, the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople sent Christian missionaries to the Slavs in 863. These preachers, Saints Cyril and Methodius, pioneered a language called *Old Church Slavonic*, the holy language of the Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe.
- ▶ Naturally, peoples who received their new faith from Constantinople would tend to orient themselves towards Constantinople. This led to a rivalry among Christians, because missionaries from the German lands also came to preach among the Slavs, gaining influence for Latin Christianity from the west.
- ▶ With time, friction between the Latin West and Orthodox East led to the Great Schism of 1054, when leaders of these churches excommunicated one another. Later, when the Western crusaders sacked the center of Orthodoxy in Constantinople in 1204, the traumatic attack hardened the division into one that endures to the present day.
- ▶ In the medieval period, throughout Eastern Europe, the arrival of Christian churches also brought literate administrators. This encouraged political organization. The first state in the region was the Bulgarian Empire, which took on Orthodoxy from the nearby Byzantine Empire, also passing that faith to the lands of Romania. In what is now the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a Greater Moravian Empire flourished for a century, until the Magyars smashed that state in 907.
- ▶ To the north, in 966, the new kingdom of Poland accepted Catholicism. In the lands of the East Slavs, Rus also became Christian with the baptism of Prince Vladimir, later Saint Vladimir.

- ▶ Later than these other kingdoms, Hungary's king, Saint Stephen, accepted Roman Catholic Christianity in 1001. Religion and power, church and state, were fused into a civilizational package in these formative ages.
- ▶ At this point, Islam also made its entry into Eastern Europe. The Ottoman Turks established themselves in Anatolia in Asia Minor, and steadily pressed back the weakening Byzantine Empire. Even before they finally captured the capital of Constantinople, which sits where Asia and Europe meet, they had already simply moved around that pivotal geopolitical location into the Balkans. The Ottomans would establish an empire there that lasted for 500 years, into the 20th century.

Jewish Arrivals

- ▶ Jews had lived in Eastern Europe from the 600s, but arrived in larger numbers especially after 1095, driven here by the persecutions by Christians that accompanied the Crusades.
- ▶ Later, when Jews were irrationally blamed for the Black Death, more fled to Eastern Europe. At this point, Eastern European countries were more welcoming. The Polish kingdom offered Jews special privileges and official guarantees of rights.
- ▶ Jews who had come from the German lands called themselves *Ashkenazi*, after the Hebrew name for Germany. They spoke Yiddish (medieval German) with admixtures of other vocabularies. Today, Ashkenazim represent more than 80 percent of the world's Jewish community.
- ▶ By contrast, in the Balkans, the Jews were of a branch called *Sephardim*, from the Hebrew word for Spain. They fled Spain when persecuted and then expelled from the Iberian lands. Their language was Ladino.

Other Peoples

- ▶ In the Middle Ages, the wandering Roma people reached Eastern Europe. They came to be called *Gypsies*. That name came from the notion that they were from Egypt, hence Egyptians, but this was a misunderstanding. These wanderers in fact came to Europe from northern India via Persia.
- ▶ Many today consider *Gypsy* to be insulting, preferring the name *Roma*. They speak different dialects of Romany, related to northern Indian languages. At first they were welcomed as skilled metalworkers and traders in horses. But not long after their arrival, they often faced discrimination and banishment.
- ▶ The last of the explosions of Central Asian nomadic peoples into Eastern Europe came with the Mongols. When the Mongols turned back in 1242, they remained in Russia, which they had overrun on their way west. The Mongols dominated the Russian lands for some 200 more years. This servitude fatefully separated Russian history from developments to the west, including the Renaissance and Reformation.

German Movement

- ▶ Another formative wave was German movement eastward from 1000 to 1300. This was a stream of traders, settlers, farmers, craftsmen, monks, and knights. Some came in peace, and others with aggressive intentions. Later, German nationalists would label all this the *Drang nach Osten*, the “Drive to the East” that they claimed was German destiny. In reality, it was not a centrally planned or uniform push.
- ▶ In fact, some settlers were invited. Tens of thousands of German settlers took up invitations to settle in Hungary, Transylvania, Poland, and Bohemia. They were prized as able farmers and modernizers of trade.

- ▶ Along the Baltic Sea coast, a huge German trading company called the *Hanse* was established, reaching its height around the year 1300. The Hanse traders had offices from Estonia to London, and they brought German ways with them.
- ▶ If the Hanse brought trade, German crusading knights brought the cross, fire, and the sword to Eastern Europe. They were involved in the Baltic Crusades, from 1147. While the Danish kingdom invaded Estonia to convert it and conquer it, German military religious orders, the Sword Brothers and the Teutonic Knights, invaded Latvia and Lithuania. Estonia and Latvia were overrun, but the pagan Lithuanians beat back these fighting monks.
- ▶ To the south, the Teutonic Knights did subdue and subjugate another Baltic tribe, the ancient Prussians, who lived in territories that are now Poland and the Russian exclave territory of Kaliningrad. They eventually took away from the ancient Prussians their language and even their name.
- ▶ The Teutonic Knights also battled against Mongols, Russians, and Christian Poles. But their onslaught against the last pagans of Europe produced an unexpected reaction. The pressure of the crusaders actually united the disparate Lithuanian tribes into a growing state. Lithuania held off the Germans in the west and at the same time expanded to the east.
- ▶ Here we can vividly see connections between waves. The Mongol invasion had destroyed Kievan Rus, and now those territories lay exposed. Lithuania incorporated Slavic lands in what is now Belarus and Ukraine, until this now-forgotten empire stretched across all of Eastern Europe, from the Baltic Sea all the way down to the Black Sea. This was not the result the crusading German knights had expected.

READINGS

Bideleux and Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe*, pages 1–199.

Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East*, pages 1–43.

QUESTIONS

- 1 When do you start seeing signs of a divergence between Eastern and Western Europe's historical paths?
- 2 Other than the hypothetical of the Mongols continuing in their conquests, what other alternative scenarios in medieval Eastern European history could have led to radically different results?

Clashing Golden Ages, 1389–1772

This lecture deals with Eastern Europe in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. So large a topic could have its own entire course, so our aim here will be more specific. This lecture will demonstrate how this period, from the 1300s to the 1700s, would become the stuff of later legend. One people's golden age might be another people's recollected darkest time of misery. A central theme of our course is the diversity of Eastern Europe, and here we confront another kind of diversity: the diversity of memories.

Motivation from Defeat

- ▶ On June 28, 1389, Turkish armies crowned their advance into the Balkans with a victory over the forces of Serbia, near present-day Kosovo. Prince Lazar of Serbia was defeated, captured, and beheaded. Serbia was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire for five centuries. Yet this defeat was turned into a great moral victory in Serbian legend, and became a key part of nationalist self-understanding.
- ▶ In the legend that was told and retold, the night before the battle, Prince Lazar had a divine vision. It was revealed to him that he could choose the outcome of the clash: He could gain an earthly kingdom and success, or instead gain a heavenly kingdom. He chose the latter. By this alchemy of myth, a devastating defeat was turned into a motivating memory for Serbs.
- ▶ The Turkish advance created perennial conflict on a religious frontier from the Balkans to Hungary and Wallachia, in what is today Romania. In Albania, in the 1440s, Prince Skanderbeg led a revolt against the Ottomans. Even though most Albanians converted to Islam, the memories of this uprising were later the basis of nationalism.

Romanian, Hungarian, and Ottoman Happenings

- ▶ A contemporary of Skanderbeg in Romania was Prince Vlad Tepes, also known as Prince Dracula and bearing the nickname “the Impaler.” In fighting the Turks, when he was not their vassal, he became renowned for his cruelty and impaling of prisoners. Centuries later, the British author Bram Stoker was inspired to create a vampire legend using the nickname of this frontier fighter.
- ▶ Hungarians recall this time as the golden age of Matthias Corvinus, the king of Hungary, Croatia, and Bohemia, as well as the duke of Austria. But after his reign, Hungary fell to the Turks, when at the 1526 Battle of Mohacs the Hungarian king Louis II was killed and most of Hungarian territory became Ottoman. A dismal footnote: After this defeat, the Roma or so-called Gypsies were often scapegoated, increasingly seen as dangerous and alleged spies for the Turks.
- ▶ The expanding Ottoman Empire also had captured what remained of the Byzantine Empire, when they took the great capital of Constantinople in 1453. This ushered in what was recalled as an Ottoman golden age, a huge empire lasting 500 years.
- ▶ Christians and Jews were not forced to convert, but were considered *dhimmi*, or subject or protected populations, who had to pay special taxes. A tax levied in the Balkans was the *devshirme*, or child-tax: A certain number of boys from Christian populations had to be given to the Ottoman state, which would raise them as elite fighters, the janissaries.



Vlad “the Impaler”

- Significant conversions to Islam did take place in Albania, Bosnia, and elsewhere, but still about 80 percent of the Balkan populations remained Christian. Moreover, Sephardic Jews fleeing persecution in Europe were welcomed and settled in the port cities.

Poland-Lithuania

- The Teutonic Knights, from their headquarters at the great castle of Marienburg on the Baltic coast, spent some time waging war against the pagan Lithuanians. That pressure had provoked the building of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, until this state stretched all the way from the Baltic to the Black Sea, with a population mostly of Orthodox Slavs, in what is present-day Ukraine.
- In 1386, Polish leaders invited the Grand Duke of Lithuania Jogaila to marry the heiress to the Polish throne and rule a united powerful realm. The price would be Christian baptism for him and his people. King Jagiello, as he came to be known in Polish, together with his cousin Vytautas coordinated the fight against the German crusaders. The climax came at the Battle of Tannenberg.



- ▶ On July 15, 1410, the battle raged for six hours. At its end, half of the crusading knights lay dead. The Teutonic Order never recovered its former power. This victory closed off further German military expansion in the region.
- ▶ In 1569, at the Union of Lublin, the kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania were joined into a single state. The dynasty of the Jagiellonians, lasting until 1572, raised Poland-Lithuania to the status of a great power and for a time provided kings for Hungary and Bohemia.
- ▶ Many Polish people viewed the 1400s and 1500s as Poland's golden age. But what was recalled by Polish people as a golden age was instead understood by later Lithuanian writers and nationalists as decline. Lithuania's territories, three times larger than the Polish areas, now passed to Poland, and the attractions of Polish culture, language, and social status overwhelmed local traditions.

The Cossacks

- ▶ Fighting on horseback, living a frontier life, free men and women called the *Cossacks* established communities on the steppes north of the Black Sea. They sometimes fought for and sometimes against Poland-Lithuania. Their existence would later be idealized in Ukrainian literature and legend.
- ▶ In 1648, a great revolt against Polish rule was led by the Cossack chieftain Bogdan Khmelnytsky. The revolt also targeted Jews. Poland and the rising power of Russia were dragged in to the conflict, until in 1667 these states divided the region between themselves. In coming years, more of Ukraine fell to Russian rule, and some of the once-independent Cossacks would become feared police forces for the Russian tsar.
- ▶ North of Poland-Lithuania, the Baltic provinces of Livonia and Estonia had earlier been under the control of the Teutonic Knights. Once the Reformation came, the German ruling class essentially privatized their holdings and became the feudal rulers of the region, the famous Baltic Barons.

- ▶ But then the provinces fell to Swedish rule. Oddly, this occupation is sometimes remembered as a golden age in Estonia, as Swedish rule was marked by reforms and educational progress.

Bohemia

- ▶ In Bohemia, the kingdom in the west of what is today the Czech Republic, the golden age came earlier, with the rule of King Charles IV in the 1300s. He expanded the kingdom, became Holy Roman Emperor, and built up the capital of Prague.
- ▶ After this peak, turmoil followed. In a prelude to the Protestant Reformation, the Czech reformer Jan Hus and his followers championed religious renewal. After Hus was burned as a heretic in 1415, conflict continued. In 1419, supporters of Hus threw Prague city officials out of window. This was the first defenestration of Prague. (*Defenestration* is a fancy term for throwing someone out a window.) Religious and civil war broke out.
- ▶ In fact, the Thirty Years' War, lasting from 1618 to 1648, also started in Prague. It began when Protestant Czech nobles defenestrated the emissaries of the German Catholic Holy Roman Emperor, deliberately imitating what had happened in 1419. Angered by the emperor's violation of their earlier rights, the Czech nobles seized the imperial representatives and threw them from a high window in the Bohemian Chancellery.
- ▶ The emissaries all survived. Catholic propagandists declared this was because of divine intervention, while Protestants declared it was because they landed on a pile of manure in the courtyard. The result of this act was three decades of fierce religious warfare.
- ▶ For Bohemia, the outcome was profound. In the 1620 Battle of White Mountain, the Czech nobility was crushingly defeated and then dispossessed of their lands, which were given to loyal German noble families. Czech literature recalled this defeat as a profound ethnic tragedy, the loss of self-rule.

The Siege of Vienna

- ▶ During the 1683 siege of Vienna, the Ottoman Turks made one last push to capture that glorious city. Vienna was the court of the great Habsburg dynasty, also known as the House of Austria.
- ▶ In a throwback to the days of cooperating against the Mongols, different Christian kingdoms organized a relief effort, led by King Jan III Sobieski of Poland-Lithuania. Polish and German knights fought side by side. The rescue force came sweeping in, staging a massive cavalry charge. The Turkish armies were driven back, never to return.
- ▶ In the decades after the battle, the Turkish retreat continued, as the Habsburg forces drove them out of Hungary and Transylvania. The Habsburgs now reoriented themselves as a ruling house in Eastern Europe.
- ▶ For the Polish, the memory of having saved Europe was a source of pride. Indeed, recalling also how the Mongols had turned back in the 13th century, some Polish writers claimed that this was a key part of Polish identity.

Expansions and Declines

- ▶ After the Vienna defeat of the Ottomans, the Habsburg forces moved towards the Balkans to replace them, pushing them back across the mighty Danube River. By 1700, Austria had doubled in size.
- ▶ Under the Empress Maria Theresa, who came to the throne in 1740, German settlers were sent to colonize some of the war-torn areas. These so-called Danube Swabians were sent to Transylvania, joining older German settlers there. New settlers came to the Banat (where present-day Serbia, Romania, and Hungary meet), to Slavonia in Croatia, and the Bukovina (where Ukraine and Romania meet). Austria in that sense continued some of the historic eastward expansion of Germans.



- ▶ Another rising German state with an imperialist appetite was the northern kingdom of Prussia. As a former crusader state, Prussia had been turned into a secular duchy with the Reformation and was a vassal of Poland. But a series of determined princes made it sovereign, free of Poland, and then in 1701 turned it into a kingdom. It was unlike any other European state.
- ▶ Under militaristic kings, some 80 percent of revenues went into building a strong army. The officer class was the so-called Junker aristocracy, the descendants of the Teutonic Knights. The values of the kingdom were militaristic. The ideal was called *Kadavergehorsam*, that is, the “obedience of a corpse,”—with no will of the self, only following orders.

The Russian Empire

- ▶ Mongols once occupied the Russian lands, cutting them off from Eastern Europe, which they had left behind in 1241. Acting as a subcontractor for Mongol rule in Russia was the city-state of Moscow, which grew strong and then rose up to overthrow Mongol rule in 1480.

- ▶ The ruler who did this, Ivan III, began to sign himself *Tsar*, that is, “Caesar” or “emperor.” This claim had to do with momentous historic events that had just occurred: In 1453, the Ottoman Turks had seized the Byzantine Empire with the fall of Constantinople. After more than a thousand years, the Roman Empire in the East was gone. Byzantium had had a huge cultural impact on Moscow, and Ivan had married the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, so he was eager to make the connection.

- ▶ Russian clerics in Moscow developed a messianic idea, at first religious, then political: the concept of the third Rome. This notion held that Rome in Italy had been the first great spiritual center. After the fall of the Roman Empire, that role had been transferred to Constantinople, the second Rome. Now, with Constantinople’s fall, Moscow had become the third Rome, with a divine calling to impose its authority.
- ▶ Russia was set on a course of expansion. Ivan IV, known as Ivan the Terrible, fought wars trying to reach the Baltic, unsuccessfully. But this goal was accomplished later by Peter the Great.
- ▶ After defeating a Swedish invasion, Peter declared his state the Russian Empire in 1721. He gained lands at the eastern end of the Baltic, including present-day Estonia and most of Latvia. The German nobility, the Baltic Barons, switched their feudal loyalties to the Russian tsar, seeing his rule as a guarantee of their preeminent social position and wealth. Russian power had begun to loom over Eastern Europe.



READINGS

Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*.

Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pages 1–92.

QUESTIONS

- 1 If the results of the battles of Kosovo and Tannenberg were reversed, how would later history have evolved differently?
- 2 Is it wrong and dangerous for a people to idealize a golden age in their past? Why or why not?

The Great Crime of Empires: Poland Divided

LECTURE

4

From 1772 to 1795, surrounding empires ate the state of Poland-Lithuania alive. These were the so-called partitions of Poland-Lithuania, three stages in the destruction of a state. The encroaching empires split it among themselves, claiming that they were in fact bringing stability to the region. It is worth looking at this horrifying spectacle because it tells us how republics or democratic states can disintegrate. The partitions' aftermath shows how even without a physical state to call home, the Polish people kept their identity alive.

Rejtan's Gesture

- ▶ The first partition of Poland-Lithuania happened in 1772. In the years before, Polish nobles had joined a confederation to resist both Russian influence within Poland and their own Polish king. Civil strife within provided an excuse for Russia, Prussia, and Austria to invade.
- ▶ Then, the occupying empires who took territory on all sides even wanted the state of Poland-Lithuania to formally approve the action, to give it the appearance of legitimacy. One person, the young Polish nobleman Tadeusz Rejtan, knew how he would react to this news. He aimed to stop it, or at least to speak out loudly against it.



Tadeusz Rejtan



Jan Matejko's *Rejtan*—*The Fall of Poland*

- ▶ When the Polish-Lithuanian parliament met to approve the act in 1773, Rejtan protested. In an act immortalized in a historical painting by Jan Matejko, Rejtan threw himself to the doorstep of the parliamentary hall and tore open his traditional noble robes to bare his breast, a gesture that meant, “Over my dead body!”
- ▶ Ultimately, this proud gesture did not change the reality. The parliament gave its approval to foreign aggression, and eventually Rejtan killed himself, driven mad by despair. But his gesture, immortalized in painting and legend, had at least done this: He had boldly refused to accept the reality of injustice.

Buildup to the Partitions

- ▶ How had Poland-Lithuania, once the largest state in Europe, reached such a point of weakness, vulnerability, and decline? Constant wars against Russia, Sweden, and the Ottoman Turks had taken their toll. When plague swept through Poland-Lithuania in the early 18th century, the state lost about a quarter of its population.

- ▶ Yet a sense of greatness remained, even as the foundations were undermined. The royal capital had been moved from Krakow north to Warsaw, and this city now grew into a metropolis.
- ▶ Poland-Lithuania was remarkable for its nobles' wide participation in politics. The nobility invited foreign kings, using elective monarchy to put in place monarchs who would guarantee their own social standing.
- ▶ An aristocratic republic, Poland has been called too democratic for its own good. A notorious example was the *liberum veto* tradition. This "free veto" meant that in parliament, even after long debate, a single noble could rise and announce, "I forbid it!" and proposed policy would have to be broken off.
- ▶ The liberum veto and the elective monarchy allowed outside powers wide scope for mischief and intervention. Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sweden, and even faraway France began secretly sponsoring noble factions within Poland, advancing their own favored candidates for the throne, and manipulating the parliament.

The First Partition

- ▶ By the 18th century, the encroachments and manipulations of the surrounding empires were too obvious to be ignored. Russia, Prussia, and Austria were especially aggressive.
- ▶ In Russia, Catherine the Great ruled. She had helped make another former lover of hers the king of Poland. This was the Polish noble, Stanislaw August Poniatowski. Her intent was thus to make Poland-Lithuania essentially a satellite state.
- ▶ In the north German kingdom of Prussia, King Frederick the Great was eager for Polish territory. He is supposed to have compared Poland to an artichoke and said he wanted to eat it leaf by leaf.

- ▶ In the Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs, the empress Maria Theresa worried about the legality of dividing up Poland, but went along with it. Frederick the Great of Prussia joked about her flexible morality—“the more she cries, the more she takes.”
- ▶ In 1768 a group of Polish nobles, with Rejtan perhaps among them, organized an attempt to expel foreign control. This was the Confederation of Bar, named after the city where it was formed.
- ▶ This venture failed, as did the plans of Poniatowski, who dreamed of reforming Poland. In fact, attempts at reform alarmed the surrounding empires, who wanted weakness in Poland, to ensure their control.
- ▶ In 1772, Russia, Prussia, and Austria moved in their armies and grabbed territory for themselves. Russia gained lands in the east that had been part of Lithuania, today’s Belarus and parts of Ukraine. Austria took the region called Galicia, in the south. Prussia, however, got the most important gains: territory on the Baltic Sea that allowed them to link up noncontiguous parts of the Prussian Kingdom.
- ▶ At a stroke, Poland-Lithuania lost a third of its territory, and more than a third of its population. Around the world, international opinion was shocked at the nakedness of this act. To legitimize it, the partitioning powers insisted that the parliament, the Sejm, agree to it, and this is when Rejtan threw himself down in protest.

The Second and Third Partitions

- ▶ After the first partition, Polish patriots tended to have one of two reactions. Some went abroad, into exile. Two of them, Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Casimir Pulaski, were among the estimated 600 Polish who left to help the American colonists in their war of independence against the British. Hence, today there are towns named after these Polish nobles, places like Kosciuszko, Mississippi, and Pulaski, Tennessee.

- ▶ The other reaction was to seek reform, against all odds, in what remained of Poland. A new parliament, the Great Sejm, gathered and tried to set Poland on a new, more effective course. They formed an education committee and adopted a durable constitution.
- ▶ This was too much for the surrounding empires; they could accept Polish weakness, but not reform. In 1792, Prussia and Russia moved in again, and seized more lands.
- ▶ Warsaw and Vilnius rose up against the empires. Kosciuszko, who had returned to Poland, came to command the insurrection. To broaden support, he declared freedom from serfdom and land for the peasants who would support the national cause. In Warsaw, the Jewish community organized a Jewish regiment to participate in the revolt. Yet the widespread revolt failed. Kosciuszko was beaten on the battlefield and captured by the Russians in October 1794. Warsaw fell to Russian armies after massacres in its suburbs.
- ▶ In 1795, the three empires completed the third and last partition of Poland-Lithuania, gobbling up the remaining territories. With matchless cynicism, the occupying powers also agreed to abolish the memory of Poland—to not use the name for the territory in documents. After 800 years of history, Poland was to be forgotten.



Tadeusz Kosciuszko



Justifying the Partitions

- ▶ For the partitioning empires, the wider question of how to justify this act to international opinion remained. If you mugged a country in broad daylight, how could you argue it was justified?
- ▶ Propagandists supporting the partitions used Enlightenment ideas to claim it was just. This in fact proved a key moment in European intellectual and cultural history, because it was from here that many of the stereotypes of Eastern Europe as backward, barbaric, and uncivilized came.
- ▶ To justify their act, intellectuals taking the side of the partitioning powers claimed that Poland had always been essentially disordered, with an ungovernable and chaotic people.
- ▶ Larry Wolff's book, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, discusses the ideas developed in this age. In earlier centuries, the imagined dividing line in Europe had run between the frozen, barbaric North and the sunny, civilized South. In his book, Wolff shows how Enlightenment thinkers engineered

a “conceptual reorientation” of Europe, now divided into a civilized West and a not-yet-civilized East. Here, in the partitions of Poland-Lithuania, intellectual imaginings coincided with international politics.

Poland Goes On

- ▶ The imperial powers had extinguished the state of Poland, but a sense of the nation lived on, even as the government structures were blown apart and abolished. The nation resided not in offices, but in the hearts of the people.
- ▶ For the next 123 years, until Polish independence was won again, Polish patriots waged constant revolts and underground operations. The empires needed to work together diligently to keep the Poles down.
- ▶ The fact that the “Polish question” was a vivid and volatile factor in international politics became clear almost immediately after the end of the Polish state. Napoleon Bonaparte sought to use it against other empires for his own boundless ambitions of European empire. Noticing the military talents of the many Polish officers and soldiers who went into exile, Napoleon formed three Polish legions from exiles from 1797 on.
- ▶ Napoleon sent these liberty-devoted legions on the most repellent and cynical of missions, when he dispatched them to the island nation of Haiti. They were supposed to help put down a slave revolt, a disheartening mission that ended badly for the Polish—many died of disease before the troops withdrew. The experience raised troubling questions about Napoleon’s integrity.
- ▶ Yet Polish hopes and love for Napoleon flared up again just a few years later, in 1807, when Napoleon established a new state that he named the Duchy of Warsaw. But this was a small satellite state, rather than a reborn Poland-Lithuania. Napoleon essentially taunted the Polish patriots, implying they had to prove they were worthy of freedom.

- ▶ In 1812, When Napoleon launched his ill-fated invasion of Russia, 100,000 Polish joined in. But Russia's winter and the hit-and-run tactics of Russian Cossacks defeated Napoleon's army. The Polish forces shared in the disaster as well, retreating back along that age-old highway of armies, commerce, and population movements, the Great North European Plain.

Later Developments

- ▶ When Napoleon was finally defeated and the victorious powers redrew Europe's map at the Congress of Vienna from 1814 to 1815, the central idea of that diplomatic summit meeting was restoration. But there was one key exception: There would be no restoration of Poland, so the partitioning empires could keep their spoils. In this way, the Polish question was made permanent as a factor in politics.
- ▶ The Tsar of Russia took the title of King of Congress Poland, as the Russian part of Poland was called. Lithuania was renamed simply and bureaucratically "the Northwest Territories." Prussia's eastern provinces included the western remnants of the bygone state, and Austria's Habsburgs ruled over Galicia and eventually the ancient royal capital of Krakow.
- ▶ But Polish patriots never acquiesced to the extinction of their country, and every generation there was a desperate, doomed revolt seeking independence. This proved a powerful demonstration that even when the state disappeared, the people remained.
- ▶ The memory of Poland-Lithuania would endure. But over time, it would come to mean different things to different ethnic groups who had once been involved in it.
- ▶ In the Russian Empire's share of the partitions, tsarist officials considered the Ukrainians and Belarusians as "Little Russians," who over time would assimilate to their Great Russian cousins. Opposing this program, poets and scholars from those groups would look back to the days when they had formed the majority of the Duchy of Lithuania.

- ▶ Likewise, the tsarist government aimed to bring Lithuanians into Russian culture, but poets and scholars among them instead idealized a golden age in the middle ages, before the powerful impact of Christianity and Polish culture.
- ▶ The Jewish communities that now found themselves incorporated into the Russian Empire faced new restrictions. The tsarist government forbade Jewish movement beyond their original locations, designating this the “Pale of Settlement.”
- ▶ Increasingly, Jews faced discrimination and legal persecution by the Tsar’s government, and might recall the better days when Poland-Lithuania had been a haven and more tolerant than the rest of Europe.

READINGS

Dabrowski, *Poland*, pages 1–337.

Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Were the Partitions of Poland-Lithuania inevitable, or could they have been forestalled; if so, how?
- 2 What made Polish society so resilient even after the dismantling of their state?

The Origins of Nationalism, 1815–1863

From the time of the Napoleonic Wars, for half a century, Romantic nationalism swept Eastern Europe. Its key propagators were poets who became bards of the nation. The English Romantic poet Percy Shelley declared, “poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” That certainly seemed the case with the four poets and visionary writers we will highlight in this lecture: the German Johann Gottfried Herder, the British Lord Byron, Adam Mickiewicz of Poland and Lithuania, and Hungary’s Sandor Petofi. We will see how they became prophets of nationalism in Eastern Europe.

Defining Nationalism

- ▶ Nationalism is a mentality, the sense that what has been called an “imagined community” of language, ancestry, history, and customs unites a people. This definition emphasizes not biology, but belief—a nation is a nation when people believe it to be.
- ▶ Once nationalism arrived in Eastern Europe, it played a complex role, as aristocrats, intellectuals, officials, and ordinary peasants understood the nation differently. It would change over time. For instance, in the dying days of Poland-Lithuania, the nobles saw themselves as the nation, with other social groups in minor supporting roles. Yet over time, the model of belonging shifted. The nation came to be identified with the people more broadly, under the impact of the democratic ideas of the American and French revolutions, as well as liberalism.
- ▶ Instead of seeing one class or social estate as the nation, now ethnicity and especially the marker of language came to be central in Eastern Europe, in a process that developed over some two centuries.
- ▶ How does nationalism grow? The Czech historian Miroslav Hroch has proposed a very influential model of three phases in nation building.

In Phase A, a small group of activists, scholars, and poets investigate the language and past of a people, and call attention to it so that these shared things would be acknowledged, without yet leaping to make political demands.

- ▶ In Phase B, an expanding group of enthusiasts work to expand the consciousness to broader parts of the population, proposing the vision of what the nation can become.
- ▶ In Phase C, this trend becomes a full national movement, addressing the masses with different emphases and concepts for the future. In this lecture, we trace the first two phases, and in later ones will see the further trajectory.

Johann Gottfried Herder

- ▶ The German writer Johann Gottfried Herder was the true originator of Romantic nationalism and cultural relativism, as well as the concepts of diversity and multiculturalism that are so frequently part of our vocabulary today.
- ▶ In 1778, Herder published a selection of folk songs from different nations, called *Voices of the Peoples*. In this collection and in his historical works, Herder promoted a new message.



Johann Gottfried Herder

- ▶ He argued that each people, or *Volk*, is different, and in its language resides its uniqueness, in folklore and in folksongs. Paradoxically, this made him a nationalist, but an internationalist nationalist. He ringingly declared that the problem of being human had been solved in many different ways, with all cultures worthy, contributing to a providential evolution of humanity.
- ▶ Each people needed to develop its own culture freely, to enrich mankind. It followed from this that it was a crime to enslave or impose culture on others, and Herder especially condemned the ways in which the Slavic peoples had been enslaved and abused by their neighbors.
- ▶ Herder's vision of nations peacefully cooperating, unified in pursuit of individual authenticity, was a potent one. Each ethnic group found intellectuals and historians to champion their cause and invoke their past golden age.
- ▶ Only later would the potential conflicts and contradictions come more clearly into focus. This was Romantic nationalism. Romanticism was a movement in arts and politics that emphasized the power of the emotions over the rationality which the Enlightenment celebrated.
- ▶ The key to Romanticism was a stress on authenticity and an impatient reaching for sometimes-impossible ideals. There's a joke that the ultimate Romantic gesture is to fling yourself onto your horse and ride madly off in all directions at once. At first, the liberating potential of Romantic nationalism had enormous appeal.

Greece and Serbia

- ▶ In the Balkans, that appeal became famously international, as different ethnic groups there sought to throw off Ottoman Turkish rule. When the Greek Revolution against the Ottomans broke out in 1821, the rebels won international support.

- ▶ In 1823, the scandalous English poet George Gordon, better known as Lord Byron, travelled there to fight alongside the Greek forces. This was part of a larger trend called *philhellenism*, romantic support for an idealized cause, reviving the glories of ancient Greece. Byron dedicated himself to this, but then fell ill with fever and died in Missolonghi, at the age of 36. In Romantic fashion, he had died trying. By 1832, Greece was independent.



- ▶ In Serbia, from 1804 to 1830, a series of revolts against the Ottomans flared up again and again, at first led by Karadorde (“Black George”) and Milos Obrenovic, leaders who founded contending dynasties within Serbian politics. Finally, by 1830, Serbia won autonomy from the Turks.

Adam Mickiewicz

- ▶ In the lands that had been Poland-Lithuania, the poet Adam Mickiewicz became a powerful spokesman for nationalism, and indeed went on to inspire three nationalist projects—he was claimed by the Polish, Lithuanians, and Belarusians.
- ▶ As a poet, he crafted a message of messianic nationalism that infused Polish hopes. Indeed, even while Poland had been wiped off the map for 123 years, regular uprisings showed the durable tradition of conspiracy and revolts.

- ▶ Born in 1798, Mickiewicz came from what had been the eastern borderlands of Poland-Lithuania, near Nowogrodek in today's Belarus. He attended the University of Vilnius, the largest in the Russian Empire. Mickiewicz inevitably joined a secret student society.



Adam Mickiewicz

- ▶ Over time, it became more radical, dedicated to the resurrection of Poland. He and his friends were arrested by the tsar's soldiers and deported to the Russian Empire. He had begun writing poetry while a student, but now exile marked the creativity which made him Poland's greatest poet and national hero.
- ▶ During the 1830s, Mickiewicz poured out a succession of masterworks, with urgent messages about the fate of his homeland. In his 1834 epic poem, *Pan Tadeusz*, he portrayed the vanished society he longed for, in ringing phrases: "Lithuania! My Fatherland! You are like health! Only he who has lost you may know your true worth."
- ▶ In his poems and prophetic writings, Mickiewicz turned from a golden noble past to a model for the future, a project of messianic nationalism that could involve anyone who professed to be Polish. This was the concept that Poland was the Christ of the Nations, and that it had a unique role to play in Europe and the world. Its suffering would lead to the resurrection and redemption to come.
- ▶ Mickiewicz kept his hopes alive in exile. He died in Constantinople while planning another war of liberation to free Poland. Years after, his body was brought to Krakow and placed where the old Polish kings and the hero Kosciuszko also rest.

1848's Revolutions

- ▶ At one key moment in European history at the middle of the 19th century, it seemed that the Romantic nationalist dreams might actually come true. The revolutions of 1848 swept most of the Continent, in one country after another: first France, then the German lands, the Italian lands, Denmark, the Polish territories, and the Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs.
- ▶ This event was called the *Springtime of Nations*, because the shared hope was that all European nations would throw off monarchical tyranny and become liberal, democratic, and united in brotherhood.
- ▶ But the revolutions of 1848 failed. Reactionary monarchies nearly toppled in 1848, but then regrouped and fended off the revolutionary movements, exploiting their divisions and inexperience.
- ▶ The course of 1848 especially disappointed those thinkers who hoped nationalities could work together for their collective liberation. Instead of brotherhood, national and ethnic divisions had arisen. For instance, German ideals clashed with Pan-Slavism, the notion that a tie of solidarity should unite Slavic peoples.
- ▶ A different ethnic division appeared in the revolution in the province of Wallachia and Moldavia, earlier provinces of the Ottoman Empire that had been taken by the Russian Empire. In the revolution, the fiery Ana Ipatescu, with a sword in her hand, led crowds with national flags, demanding independence for Romanians under Russian and Hungarian control.

Hungary's Revolt

- ▶ Of these revolts, the one that went furthest was that of Hungary's. Hungary had been part of the Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs, but now became independent, even if only for a short six months.

- ▶ The lead-up to 1848 involved the growth of Magyar nationalism. After a century and a half of Ottoman rule in most of Hungary, the Ottomans had been driven out, but there followed Habsburg rule from Vienna.
- ▶ In March of 1848, when news arrived of the outbreak of revolution in Vienna, the city of Budapest on the Danube saw a bloodless overthrow of the earlier regime. It began with a group of young men at the Café Pilvax, which exists to this very day.
- ▶ Their spokesman was the young poet Sandor Petofi. In a Romantic exaltation, Petofi wrote out a revolutionary poem that later became the national anthem: “The National Song.” It was a call to nationalism:

Rise, Magyar, the homeland calls!
 The time is here, now or never!
 Shall we be slaves or free? ...
 We vow that we will be slaves no longer!

- ▶ Petofi denounced the nobles and monarchy, arguing for social transformation. Demands included freedom from censorship, universal suffrage for men, and the abolition of serfdom. The Hungarian revolutionary government enacted sweeping reforms, and on April 14, 1849, declared total independence from the Habsburgs.
- ▶ The radical leader Lajos Kossuth hoped that Hungarian democracy would solve all the internal problems of the land and make minorities assimilate to the dominant Magyars.
- ▶ In 1849, the Hungarians were still holding out, fired by Kossuth’s charismatic speeches and the poems of Petofi. Hungarian armed forces were led by a Polish exile general, Jozef Bem, and indeed many other Polish exiles fought in the effort.
- ▶ Because the young Habsburg emperor Franz Josef could not put down the Hungarians himself, he requested help from the Russian emperor, Nicholas I. The tsar feared that if the revolution succeeded, his own

Polish territories would be next. Russia sent 100,000 soldiers to quell the Hungarians.

- In July 1849, at a climactic battle at Segesvar (today Sighisoara) in Romania, the Hungarians were defeated. Petofi disappeared on the battlefield, most likely killed and disfigured. The Hungarian army surrendered, but made a proud point of doing so to the Russians, not the Austrians, just to make clear that only this outside force had won. Inside Hungary, repression by the Austrian Empire was dreadful, with over 100 executions of generals and government officials.



Lajos Kossuth

- Kossuth fled abroad into exile. He made a triumphant tour through England and the U.S., giving fiery speeches to great ovations in support of Hungary. Yet little governmental support was forthcoming, and Kossuth settled in London, where so many other political exiles lived and dreamed of home, never to return in their lifetimes.

READINGS

Baár, *Historians and Nationalism*.

Zamoyski, *Holy Madness*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How did poets and visionaries command such respect in the Romantic era?
- 2 What were the main reasons for the failure of the 1848 “Springtime of Nations?”

In the decades before all of Europe was blown apart in World War I, there were many moments when imperial authorities, with all the immense power of the state, tried to dictate what the identities of the people under their rule should be. Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire all tried in different ways to master the highly volatile power of nationalism, which had been revealed in the revolts of the earlier 19th century. Each of these empires crafted an imperial ideology to defuse ethnic grievances, but in all cases had only limited success.

Attempts at Controlling Nationalism

- ▶ Conservative empires worried, with good reason, about the explosive potential of nationalism. One reason had to do with how the social landscape was structured in much of Eastern Europe: estate or class very often overlapped with ethnicity. In such a setup, social tensions or resentments could immediately take on an ethnic charge, making nationalism even more potent.
- ▶ Imperial structures came under stress. This was most immediately clear in the case of the Russian Empire. In the 1850s, Russia lost the Crimean War to the Ottoman Empire and its Western allies, Britain and France. Russia was shocked at the revelation of its weakness.
- ▶ A permanent threat came from regular Polish uprisings. After the Russian authorities had crushed the Polish revolt of 1863, they took an especially harsh approach, executing leaders and sending thousands into Siberian exile. The tsar's government increasingly enforced policies that have been called *Russification*, to turn the minorities into Russians culturally and by language. These very policies touched off a counter-reaction.

- ▶ After the 1863 uprising, many patriotic Poles swore off of rebellion, espousing the concept of *organic work*. This ideology suggested that rather than doomed Romantic uprisings, work in economics and education would profit the Polish nation much more. Slow progress would be more durable.
- ▶ Over time, as some Polish intellectuals grew frustrated with the slow pace of organic work, they founded a more radical rightist group: the National Democrats, under Roman Dmowski, which emphasized a more exclusive stress on ethnic Polishness.

Russian Happenings

- ▶ Reacting to the 1863 revolt in the lands of Lithuania, tsarist authorities banned printing Lithuanian in the usual Roman alphabet, instead insisting that Cyrillic letters be used. The expectation was that this would move the Lithuanians closer to Russian culture over time, away from Polish influence.
- ▶ This ban was in effect from 1864 to 1904 and proved a huge disaster, because it provoked a widespread book-smuggling movement. The Lithuanian language actually underwent a revival in defiance of the government, as a result of the book ban.
- ▶ In the Baltic provinces, in today's Estonia and Latvia, Russian language also replaced the earlier German used by the Baltic Barons and their local administrations. This placed the Baltic Germans into an agonized position: They were still loyal to the Tsar as they had been, but they now grew alienated from the state.
- ▶ Nationalist stirrings also began among Ukrainians. Traditionally, the Russian authorities had refused to even consider Ukrainians a distinct people. Instead, they were referred to patronizingly as "Little Russians," who would soon assimilate to the Great Russian big brothers. This was

the message of Pan-Slavism, endorsed by government officials. The Uniate Church had been banned, to bring all Ukrainians into the Russian Orthodox fold.

- ▶ But a different model was proposed by intellectuals living in Ukrainian lands that had fallen to Austria during the partitions. There, in a more tolerant cultural environment, the writer Mykhailo Hrushevsky outlined a separate existence for Ukrainians.

German and Austrian Concerns

- ▶ A different set of challenges faced the new German Empire, which had been founded in 1871 by Count Otto von Bismarck. Nicknamed the Iron Chancellor, Bismarck led his kingdom of Prussia into a series of wars that united the German lands around Prussia, while beating his rival, the Austrian Empire.
- ▶ The brand-new Reich had worries about an already present Polish population, especially in the east, as well as incoming Polish migrant workers. But government attempts to settle Germans in the east and to Germanize minorities predictably backfired, producing a new assertiveness among the Polish minority.
- ▶ Such concerns and more haunted the Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs, which had more than 12 major ethnic groups, including Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Poles, Romanians, Ukrainians, Jews, and others. The man who held this together was Emperor Franz Josef.



Otto von Bismarck

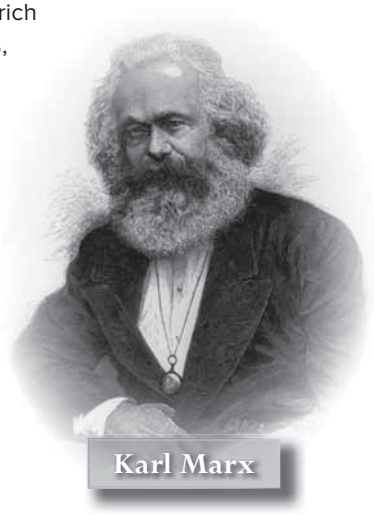
- ▶ We need to call this the Austro-Hungarian Empire after 1866, because after Bismarck defeated the Austrians, a major political restructuring was needed to save the empire. In what was called the Compromise, the Hungarian (Magyar) elites were elevated to a new status in the new Dual Monarchy.
- ▶ Hungary now shared with the rest of the empire a figurehead (Franz Josef), a common foreign policy, customs policy, and army, but otherwise was distinct. The Magyar elite were proud of their new status. But these leaders increasingly overlooked that half of Hungary's population was not Magyar.
- ▶ Within the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy, diversity was also striking. Although German speakers had dominated before, non-Germans outnumbered them two to one. In Prague, the professor Tomas Garrigue Masaryk argued that the Czechs had a special national mission to help contribute to European progress. Austria-Hungary raised ethnic competition in schools and city governments, and riots broke out in parliament, which was swirling in tension.
- ▶ Yet not everyone was a fierce nationalist. A key example, from the Bohemian lands in the Austrian Empire, is the tradition of *Kindertausch*, or "child exchange." In areas with mixed language groups, Germans would send their child to spend a summer or even a whole year with a Czech family, and the Czech family would send their child to the German neighbors, so that the children would learn the other language.



Tomas Garrigue Masaryk

Socialism

- ▶ Around this time, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, two German radical thinkers, argued they had found the key to history and how it evolved. Soon, they claimed, society was going to see the final crash of capitalism and the middle class, overthrown by the industrial armies of the working class and the logic of history itself.
- ▶ With private property abolished, a pure state of communism would be achieved, without exploitation. In their vision, history was all about conflict between classes: Nationalism was an illusion.
- ▶ Marxism was in many ways an awkward import in Eastern Europe. This bears stressing, because later Eastern Europe would become synonymous with the Communist bloc. But this was a very unlikely development, mostly because Marx and Engels expected their revolution to break out in the industrialized West.
- ▶ Eastern Europe was overwhelmingly agrarian, and Marx and Engels despised the “idiocy of rural life.” In addition, they both shared dismissive views of many Slavic and Eastern European peoples, seeing them as fit only for absorption into more progressive nations.
- ▶ In spite of this, the promise of secular salvation offered by socialism did win followers in Eastern Europe. In 1892, the Polish Socialist Party was founded, and in 1897 came the Jewish socialist alliance, the Bund. Socialists in the Austro-Hungarian Empire calling themselves Austro-Marxists, speculated on how it might be possible to reconcile socialism with national identities.



Migration

- ▶ Apart from ideologies of nationalism or socialism, a more immediate way of dealing with the volatility of change in Eastern Europe was simply to migrate westwards. And this indeed became a mass phenomenon in the late 19th century.
- ▶ The numbers are astonishing: From 1889 to 1914, almost one-quarter of all Lithuanians in the Russian Empire migrated, with some 250,000 coming to America.
- ▶ Around the same time, an estimated 2.5 million Polish left, most to the United States or Brazil. Waves of Bohemians, of both German and Czech background, came to the U.S. and spurred the American brewing industry, based on Bohemian lagers. The name of Budweiser beer, for instance, has a Bohemian origin.

The Balkans

- ▶ In this age of empires, certain borders began crumbling in the Balkans. Winston Churchill is famously supposed to have joked that the Balkans produce more history than they can consume locally. Indeed, the Balkans both have been the object of outside intervention and have drawn in outside powers.
- ▶ The question arose: Who was manipulating whom? This complicated situation was a function of the decline of Ottoman power in the region, which had lasted over centuries, but now was seen as fading. The Ottoman regime became known as the “sick man of Europe.” The Balkans became a power vacuum, raising the question of who would move into it.
- ▶ Two empires, which earlier had cooperated in partitioning Poland, now competed against each other: the Russian Empire and Austria-Hungary. Russian leaders captivated with the Pan-Slav concept saw for Russia a role in championing Orthodox and Slavic populations. Austria-Hungary



meanwhile was anxious about the Slavs under its own rule, and dimly could sense that if the Ottomans expired, the next sick man of Europe would be Austria-Hungary.

- When crises flared, war between the empires became a real possibility. In the 1870s, revolts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria flared up against the Ottomans, who massacred the Bulgarians. Serbia and Montenegro declared war, and Russia intervened. The 1878 Congress of Berlin redrew the Balkans, with Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro recognized as independent, but often clashing with one another over territorial questions.
- Austria-Hungary “temporarily” occupied the Ottoman territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. To gain prestige, Austria-Hungary formally incorporated this area into its empire in 1908, to the outrage of Russia and of Serbia, which wanted this territory.

- ▶ Serbian leaders, seeing themselves as the potential liberators of all the South Slavs from Ottoman rule, increasingly looked to Russia as a Pan-Slav ally. Russia backed Serb demands in the Bosnian Crisis. It seemed that war was imminent, but then Austria-Hungary's ally, the German Empire, forced Russia to back down.
- ▶ In quick succession, two more Balkan wars broke out. In 1912, the Balkan League, including Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro, attacked the Ottomans and seized territories, but then they fell out among themselves. Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro joined forces with Romania and the Ottoman Empire against their recent ally, Bulgaria, and quickly defeated it.
- ▶ Yet somehow the result was more grievances. Bulgaria and the Ottomans resented their defeats. Serbia had doubled its size, but felt frustrated in its role of uniting the South Slavs. In particular, Serbia had wanted access to the Adriatic Sea, but Austria-Hungary wanted to deny them, and an international conference in London crafted a treaty recognizing the new state of Albania on the coast in 1913.
- ▶ But even Albanians were upset with the result, pointing out that the new state only included half the territory where Albanians lived and only 40 percent of their population, leaving others as minorities in neighboring states. Such universal dissatisfaction was an impressive result, and the outcome would await the outbreak of the World War I, which would happen over an incident in disputed Bosnia-Herzegovina the next year.
- ▶ But the extreme violence had already begun. An international Carnegie Endowment report recounted the devastation wrought in the Balkan Wars, what we today would call *ethnic cleansing*. The report spoke of "Houses and whole villages reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred ... incredible acts of violence, pillage and brutality of every kind." A cycle of brutality had been unleashed, and the empires of the age would not survive it either.

READINGS

Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia*.

Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 If nationalism's appeal was selective, what was the most important force working against nationalism in this era?
- 2 Was the Polish tactic of organic work a wise one, or self-defeating?

Jewish Life in the Shtetl

Before World War I, the *shtetl*, which means “small town” in Yiddish, was a particular institution in many parts of Eastern Europe. Shtetls had a life and culture all their own. There were hundreds of such towns, often with a majority Jewish population—but all these are now tragically gone, destroyed in the Holocaust during World War II. This lecture gives an overview of what shtetl life was like. It then moves on to examine how Jewish people sought to protect themselves from threats to their shtetls.

Jewish Communities

- ▶ Eastern Europe is where most of the world’s Jewish communities resided before the violence of the 20th century. By the late 1600s, nearly three-quarters of all the world’s Jews lived in Poland-Lithuania. In the modern period, Jews were about ten percent of the population of Poland, the largest minority.

shtetl



- ▶ We traced in earlier lectures how the greater tolerance of Poland-Lithuania had attracted Jewish migrants. Northwards, newer Jewish communities were established in Estonia and Latvia. To the south, every land had its Jewish settlements, from Bohemia to Galicia to Hungary to the Balkans, and on to Bulgaria, Romania, and Bessarabia (what is today the republic of Moldova).
- ▶ Throughout Eastern Europe, with many regional variations, these Ashkenazic communities spoke Yiddish, which means the “Jewish language,” derived from the medieval German they had spoken before emigrating. Before World War II, Yiddish had some 11 to 13 million speakers. Today, it has an estimated 4 million.
- ▶ Eastern European Jewish experience was itself tremendously diverse. Different Jewish communities had distinct self-perceptions, and were viewed as distinct by others. A good example of this is the collective identity of the Litvaks, who were residing in present-day Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* describes the stereotypical qualities of Litvaks thus: “a certain emotional dryness, the superiority of the intellect over emotion, mental alertness, sharp-wittedness, and pungency. Their piety was also questioned.” *Litvak*, or a variation of it, also is a frequently appearing last name.
- ▶ Amid this variety emerged the institution of the shtetl, the kind of small town in which an estimated 80 percent of Eastern European Jews resided. This was a unique setting, framed by the political fortunes of the region, especially the partitions that had destroyed Poland-Lithuania.
- ▶ Once the partitions had occurred, it was necessary to establish a way of life. The shtetl was one answer. Typically, this was a so-called private town, founded and owned by a Polish noble. The population engaged in trade and crafts, interacting with the surrounding countryside. Overall, the new Russian bureaucracy was to supervise these newly Russian regions.

- ▶ With the partitions, the Russian Empire had gained vast Jewish populations, which it had not had before. One bureaucratic result intended to control the Jews was the establishment by Russian empress Catherine the Great in 1791 of the so-called Pale of Settlement. Jews would be restricted to the borderlands of the Russian Empire; their movement to Russian lands further east was banned. In the years that followed, literally hundreds of discriminatory Russian imperial laws were enacted that further hemmed in Jewish life in the Pale.
- ▶ The irony is clear: While initial tolerance had brought Jews to the region to begin with, anti-Semitism became an official and threatening reality. The shtetls over time grew more impoverished and life there, never easy to begin with, became increasingly difficult.

Decline versus Opportunity

- ▶ The image of the shtetl in the Russian Empire that many Americans have derives from the famous Broadway musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*. This was indeed for many years the longest-running musical in Broadway history, then became a 1971 film.
- ▶ The show is based on Sholem Aleichem's Yiddish stories about Teyve the milkman and his many daughters. They were from the fictional shtetl of Anatevka in Ukraine, at the start of the 20th century. The musical depicts (often significantly changing Aleichem's original stories) a fading world, threatened by outside forces and modernity itself.
- ▶ However, a recent exciting book challenges this common view of the shtetl in decline. Yohanan Petrovksy-Shtern, a historian at Northwestern University, presents a bold argument in his monograph *The Golden Age Shtetl*. Petrovsky-Shtern shifts our focus back in time, to bring to life the peak period of the shtetls, from 1790 to 1840, when they thrived as centers of economic dynamism and vivid family life, communal interaction, and intense religious faith.

- ▶ This golden age lasted until the bureaucrats of the Russian Empire came to fear the independence of these centers and increasingly restricted them, demonizing the Jews. The Holocaust later destroyed them altogether.
- ▶ Of the hundreds of shtetls across the region, many of their names are little known today. A notable exception is the shtetl of Chernobyl in Ukraine, later the site of a nuclear accident.

Shtetl Activities

- ▶ Shtetls were lively centers for economic activity, with Jewish entrepreneurs excelling in the role of intermediary between the local peasants and more distant markets, as horse traders, and as grain merchants. They also served as tavern keepers or as stewards of the estates of powerful noble landlords.
- ▶ The Jewish populace included both prosperous businesspeople and the impoverished, who would be aided by charity. The community had its own administration council, the *kahal*, until these were later abolished by the Russian government.
- ▶ The houses of worship could be small and modest, or grander constructions, like the vast wooden synagogues of the region. Religious schools or academies, the yeshivas, educated boys in the prized scriptural knowledge and traditions of the community, and some grew to great fame.
- ▶ Petrovsky-Shtern also points out that in the everyday functioning of the family, women's role was the decisive one. Physically, the shtetl was partly an urban site and partly a rural one, very much embedded in the agricultural surrounding.
- ▶ In trade and economic exchange, Jewish communities interacted with surrounding Christians on a regular basis, but the lives of these neighbors continued to be both proximate *and* separate. In times of

upheaval, the shtetls could easily become targets of persecution, the focus of pogroms by peasants or Cossacks. *Pogrom* in Slavic means an elemental destruction, a riot. These devastated vulnerable communities.

Intellectual and Spiritual Currents

- ▶ The region was home to a strong mystical tradition. In the late 1700s, a movement arose that came to be called Hasidism, drawing on the teachings of the charismatic Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer. The Hasidim appealed to many ordinary people as they stressed a joyful experience of worship beyond the legal codes of proper order.
- ▶ However, while the Hasidim grew in numbers, another Jewish scholar was strongly opposed to what he felt the Hasidim represented. This was Elijah ben Solomon Zalman. He was famed for his theological rigor and his amazing feats of memory, which reflected deep piety. His followers opposed the Hasidic movement, and were called *mitnagdim*, or opponents. This fierce debate was conducted over a common goal: What is the right way to approach the divine?
- ▶ Yet another set of answers was offered by the Jewish Enlightenment ideas of the Haskala, many coming from Western Europe and especially Germany. Moses Mendelssohn inspired a message of emancipation and integration into new modern society and the secular state. This introduced the divisions of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism that are relevant today. Overall, this was a community humming with debates and ideas, passionately held and argued.

Dangers

- ▶ For all its durability, the shtetl world faced growing dangers in an increasingly hostile environment. In particular, after Russian revolutionaries assassinated the Tsar Alexander II in 1881, Jews were scapegoated and a wave of pogroms took place, leading to a surge in emigration as Jews sought to escape.

- Earlier historiography assumed that the pogroms were often directly ordered by the Tsarist regime to deflect resentment against the government. After all, the police often stood by without stopping the cruelties that ensued. Recent historical research argues that the state did not take a direct role, but revealed its internal weaknesses by not being able to quell these destructive disturbances. And clearly, many officials shared in anti-Semitic sentiments.



Tsar Alexander II

- This trend reached a terrible peak with the Kishinev pogrom of 1903. The city of Kishinev is now Chisinau, the capital of the Republic of Moldova. At that time, this was a territory within Russia called Bessarabia, which had been taken from the Ottoman Empire in 1812. Around the feast of Passover in 1903, an anti-Semitic newspaper spread false claims of ritual murder against a Christian child.
- These libels led to violence, with 47 Jews dead and more than 400 injured. Over 1,000 Jewish stores and 500 homes were destroyed. In spite of this, the rioters who were put on trial received light sentences. This led to an international outcry against how Jews were treated in the Russian Empire.
- But the climate became increasingly poisonous. In 1903, a hoax called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was published in the Russian Empire, claiming to be a blueprint for world domination by Jewish leaders. Some experts have long suspected that the forgery came from the Tsar's extensive secret police. In the following decades, this scurrilous document was translated into many languages, and praised by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* as a true revelation. It still circulates today, especially in the Middle East, where an Egyptian miniseries was produced about it.

- ▶ Among nationalists in Eastern Europe, Jews were increasingly portrayed as economic rivals, and this added to anti-Semitism. More pogroms followed in the chaos of the Revolution of 1905, which almost toppled the imperial system. The result was the growth of a Jewish self-defense movement, and in this mood new political orientations grew as well.

Zionism, Socialism, and Immigration

- ▶ The message of Zionism, the concept of winning a homeland for the Jewish people, had considerable appeal in view of the threats to communal life. A key figure in the growth of Zionism was Theodor Herzl, born in 1860 in Budapest, Hungary, to a largely assimilated German-speaking family.
- ▶ As a journalist and writer, he became increasingly concerned about the rise of anti-Semitism in both Western and Eastern Europe. In 1896, Herzl wrote and published a programmatic book, *Der Judenstaat* (translation: *The Jewish State*). The answer to surrounding nationalism was to assert Jewish national identity and organize politically, to gain a homeland that this dispersed people lacked.
- ▶ Over the previous century, there had been Eastern European Jews who had moved to Palestine to be near the holy places, but now this territory became the focus of a growing mass movement. The 1897 Zionist congress in Basel spread these ideas throughout Eastern Europe, where a generation of activists grew eager to act.
- ▶ Others of the younger generation turned to socialism as an answer. In 1897, the Jewish Worker's Union, the Bund, was founded in Vilnius to unite the Jewish working class.
- ▶ Many sought a better place by emigrating. Between 1899 and 1914, it is estimated that 1.5 million Jews emigrated to the U.S. Other Jewish emigrants resettled in London's East End, until restrictions were placed

on immigration. Still others went to France, Germany, Canada, or South Africa. Even in immigration, connections endured, and people from individual shtetls banded together into associations in faraway New York or Chicago. They kept their ties alive.

READINGS

Hoffman, *Shtetl*.

Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Golden Age Shtetl*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What made the shtetl so resilient as an institution for a long time?
- 2 What was the greatest threat that the shtetl faced at the start of the 20th century?

World War I: Destruction and Rebirth

The sights of World War I's Western Front are familiar: barbed wire, trenches, and grinding, stagnant battles. But if we shift our view to Eastern Europe, we see very different scenes. This lecture looks at how the fighting itself was different in Eastern Europe. It then examines how while World War I galvanized many Western powers, it shattered several Eastern European ones. Finally, the lecture describes Eastern European views of the war, and how they contrast with Western ones.

Serbian Retreat

- ▶ In 1915 in the Balkans, Austrian, Bulgarian, and German forces overwhelmed Serbian fighters following a long fight. The Serbian leaders vowed to do the impossible: march—in winter—across the Albanian mountains, to reach the Adriatic, and to link up with their British and French allies. They wanted to continue the fight from exile.
- ▶ This epic Serbian retreat began in October 1915. What followed were scenes of superhuman endurance, unimaginable suffering, and dire extremes. They endured snowstorms, Albanian guerrilla attacks, diseases, and Austrian aerial bombings. Thousands died, including many Serbian boys.
- ▶ When at last Allied ships reached the surviving Serbs, they took them to the island of Corfu, and then from there Serbian soldiers were shipped to continue the fight on other fronts.
- ▶ The Serbian ordeal of 1915 is far different from the deadlock and stalemate of the Western Front. That highlights this lecture's key point: The war looked almost unrecognizably different from the perspective of Eastern Europe. We can observe three main contrasts.

- First, war in the East was not a stalemate, but proved to be a war of movement, both militarily and politically, with big results.
- Second, while in the West societies mobilized effectively for total warfare, Eastern European empires and societies were torn apart by the war.
- Finally, while the Great War would afterwards be remembered by many in the West as a senseless slaughter, in the East it was rather often seen as a tragedy with a purpose.

Contrast 1: Movement

- ▶ This war of movement in fact began with a deadly car ride. On June 28, 1914, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, had come to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, on an official visit.

- ▶ This visit's date was provocative and painful. June 28 was the anniversary of the Serbian defeat by the Ottomans in Kosovo back in 1389, when Prince Lazar had fallen.



- ▶ A 19-year-old Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip was a member of a group of young activists who resented the Austro-Hungarian Empire and dreamed of some day uniting the South Slavs—that is, the Serbs, Montenegrins, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians, and others—into a shared state, independent of outside rule. Seven assassins stalked the archduke, although one dropped the idea and another threw a grenade that missed.

- ▶ When the archduke's car took a wrong turn, Princip leapt up to it and fired his pistol twice. Within minutes, the archduke and his wife were dead. Princip was arrested and tried. Because the young man was just under the age where he might have been executed, he was instead sentenced to prison, and died there of tuberculosis while the war raged.
- ▶ An international crisis now escalated. Austria-Hungary accused Serbia of complicity; Russia came to Serbia's defense. Then Germany supported Austria-Hungary against Russia, also confronting Russia's allies France and Great Britain. By August 1914, most of Europe was at war.
- ▶ While trench warfare on the Western Front was beginning, marked by immobility and gridlock, a war of movement on the Eastern Front unfolded. The dimensions were very different: The wide-open spaces of the Eastern Front were twice as long as the Western Front.
- ▶ In August 1914, German armies defeated larger Russian armies. From 1915, German armies took Russian Poland, Lithuania, and parts of Latvia. Here the German army set up a military colony which they called Ober Ost. The Germans announced that they would bring German culture and rule to these Baltic and Slavic areas, which earlier had only known *Unkultur*, "lack of culture." In general, German leaders looked forward to being the dominant power in Eastern Europe.

Contrast 2: Empire Destruction

- ▶ Our second contrast with World War I on the Western Front deals with how the war started to tear Eastern European empires apart from within. While France, Britain, and later the United States appealed to national identity in the call to arms and sacrifice, empires in Eastern Europe struggled to overcome nationalism or coopt it even before the huge pressures of modern total war.
- ▶ The diversity of Eastern Europe played a key role here, as borders did not correspond to ethnic communities, and the war often tragically set these communities against one another. A circulated rumor told of a

Russian soldier mortally wounding an Austrian one, before realizing he has just killed a fellow Jew.

- ▶ There were many such situations. When Austria was attacking Serbia, some Austrian regiments were up to one-quarter Serb, and when Serbian forces urged these to give up, they replied, “Serbs never surrender!” The Polish, partitioned by three empires, fought mostly in the German, Austrian, and Russian armies.
- ▶ How did ordinary soldiers react to this situation? Many served loyally; some deserted. One man, probably the most famous Eastern European participating in World War I, stood out for his attitude. And yet this man never really existed, but was a fictional character. This is the hero of the novel *The Good Soldier Svejk*, written just after the war by the Czech journalist and anarchist Jaroslav Hasek.
- ▶ Svejk represents anyone caught in the gears of the government or war. He reacts by seeming to be totally sincere, literal, and innocent, but in fact is profoundly ironic. He stood for a skeptical attitude towards the claims of centralized authority. Some Czechs are not fans of the idea of Švejk as a national hero, but the international popularity of Švejk showed that his message is not uniquely Czech, but rather deeply human.

Contrast 3: Views of the War

- ▶ The third key contrast involves Eastern European views of the war versus Western ones. Often, in the grief and suffering that followed the outcome of World War I, it was seen in the West as a senseless, indecisive tragedy. But in Eastern Europe, the war’s outcome in fact was decisive. The war was tragic, but it had produced vast changes.
- ▶ Most dramatically, four empires collapsed by the war’s end: first the Russian Empire, then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then the German Empire, then the Ottoman Empire. This was a huge shift. How did so vast a result happen?

- ▶ The first sign of the crumbling of empires came with the toppling of the tsar in Russia. The war-weary population simply could not go on, having lost confidence in the regime. In its place came a temporary government promising democratic rule, eventually led by the socialist Alexander Kerensky.



Alexander Kerensky

- ▶ But in November 1917, the radical socialists, or Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin seized power in a quick, sharp coup, and announced the arrival of a new era of communism. Lenin signed a humiliating peace treaty with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk, just to buy time for his revolution.
- ▶ This revealed a more general development, touching all the empires. Essentially, the corrosive impact of the conflict in Eastern Europe ate away at the political monopoly of the empires and opened up new spaces for different political projects that only a few years earlier would have seemed totally unrealistic.
- ▶ For instance, the Polish created a formidable multilayered initiative to gain independence. National Democratic politician Roman Dmowski and the world-famous pianist Ignacy Paderewski sought the sympathies of the Western allies for Polish independence, and soon the American president Woodrow Wilson was convinced. He included a restored Poland among his Fourteen Points, a list of war aims.

- ▶ To hedge bets, other Polish leaders worked with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and established Polish legions of volunteers to fight against the Russians. The key charismatic figure here was an aristocratic socialist, Jozef Pilsudski, a tremendously talented leader of men.



Vladimir Lenin

- ▶ Another Polish leader did something even more dramatic. Jozef Haller, an officer in the Polish legions fighting against the Russians, broke through their lines and joined up with Polish soldiers fighting on the Russian side. He travelled all the way north the France and the Western Front. There, he organized the so-called Blue Army or Haller's Army, made of Polish people, to fight the Germans. This gained huge sympathies for the cause of Poland.
- ▶ Another American connection formed in the case of the new state of Czechoslovakia. This state was planned into being, and announced in (of all places) Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. How did this come about?
- ▶ Tomas Masaryk was a professor of philosophy at Charles University in Prague, and leader of the Czech movement. Born in Moravia, he himself was half Slovak. He came to know the United States well.
- ▶ When the war broke out, Masaryk traveled to France, Britain, and the U.S. to gain support for the cause of creating a new united Czech and Slovak state, which of course would mean the destruction of the unity of the Austrian Empire.

- ▶ In May 1918, representatives of Czech Americans and Slovak Americans met in Pittsburgh. There, with Masaryk participating, they hammered out and signed the Pittsburgh Agreement, which endorsed the idea of a united state, with special promises for Slovak rights and language.
- ▶ While a new state of Czechoslovakia was fused from related peoples, a parallel project took place to establish a South Slav state, the aim of the assassin Gavrilo Princip and his band.
- ▶ The survivors of the earlier Serbian retreat eventually evacuated to the island of Corfu. Here, in July 1917, Serbian leaders and representatives of other South Slavs, Slovenes, and Croats signed an agreement to form a democratic, constitutional Yugoslav kingdom. This would be a united South Slav country. Serbia lost 20–25 percent of its population in the war, but would now be part of a larger state.
- ▶ In the case of Latvia, which for much of the war was divided by the front lines, half under German rule and half under Russian control, a legion was also formed. These Latvian riflemen had been volunteer units authorized by the tsar. With the collapse of the Russian Empire, some of them joined the Bolsheviks and formed Lenin's bodyguards, while others in Latvia fought for national independence and became the core of a national army.
- ▶ This last case shows is the ideological ferment in Eastern Europe in the last stages of the war. The 1917 establishment of the Bolshevik regime in Russia had huge consequences for Eastern Europe, as some found their Communist ideology appealing, others terrifying. At the same time, Woodrow Wilson's American ideas about national self-determination won support and faced challenges in the ethnic landscape of Eastern Europe.
- ▶ As World War I drew to a close in November 1918, the four empires of Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottomans imploded. That moment also inaugurated national independence for the new countries

that appeared on the map of Eastern Europe. One particular date makes this clear: On November 11, marked today as Veterans Day or Armistice Day, the guns finally fell silent on the Western Front.

- In Warsaw, on that very day, German soldiers of occupation were disarmed. Jozef Pilsudski, freed from prison, took over a newly independent Poland. November 11 is celebrated in Poland as Independence Day to the present.



READINGS

Hasek, *The Good Soldier Svejk*.

Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did the multinational empires in Eastern Europe endure for as long as they did during the First World War, rather than collapsing right away?
- 2 Which of the main contrasts between the Western Front and the Eastern Front of the First World War seems to you the most important, and why?

From Democrats to Dictators, 1918–1939

After World War I, Eastern Europe became an even more complicated place. Some factions continued fighting; new countries battled for legitimacy; and dictators took over many ruling posts. This lecture starts with a look at an attempt to sort it out: the Paris Peace Conference. From there, the lecture examines violence that continued for years after the end of World War I. Then we'll go over the rise of several dictators, and finish with the reign of terror brewing in Soviet-controlled areas.

A Gathering in Paris

- ▶ With the end of the carnage of World War I, the leaders of the alliance that defeated the Central Powers gathered at the Paris Peace Conference. Their negotiations would lead to the document they *hoped* would guarantee a stable and lasting order for world politics: the Treaty of Versailles.



- ▶ While the great powers gathered in Paris, representatives of new Eastern European countries also flocked to the negotiations. They lobbied persistently for recognition of their national independence. Soon, such ethnic lobbying frustrated the Western leaders. But no wonder these national representatives were eager: It was their future at stake.
- ▶ The Treaty of Versailles and other results of the Paris Peace Conference did not, as it is sometimes put, create or call the new independent countries of Eastern Europe into being. The new states had declared their independence before and now were struggling to defend their existence, often against one another.

Ongoing Conflicts

- ▶ While the guns on the Western Front at last fell silent in November 1918, the war's violent aftershocks and conflicts continued for two more years in Eastern Europe, in the form of border wars and internal upheavals.
- ▶ Even when it was clear that Germany had lost the war, not all German soldiers and officers were willing to accept this. Radical nationalists formed volunteer units called *Freikorps* that went to fight as mercenaries in Eastern Europe, especially in the Baltic lands. They reasoned that Germany had won the makings of a colonial empire in Eastern Europe by defeating the Russian Empire, so they might continue that eastwards movement.
- ▶ When the *Freikorps* were beaten back to Germany by the new armies of the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians, with assistance from the Western Allies, this only radicalized them further. Many of them joined the new Nazi movement. They became infamous for their extreme brutality, as when they murdered the socialist Rosa Luxemburg during a revolt in Berlin.

- ▶ A graver threat came with the new radical Communist regime established by Lenin and his Bolshevik comrades in Russia. In a deep way, this very fact of the new Marxist regime in Russia was illogical—the theories of Marx and Engels came from Western Europe and were intended for Western Europe.
- ▶ The revolution of an industrial working class presupposed advanced industry, like that of Britain, France, or the U.S. Russia, with its lagging agricultural economy, didn't fit. For Lenin, the answer lay in this: Russia, he argued, was the weakest link in a world capitalist economy, and revolt there was only the initial spark that would spread revolution worldwide. Everything depended on setting the globe afire.
- ▶ When Lenin signed the humiliating Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans in 1918, he casually said afterwards that he wasn't going to read what he had signed, because he would not follow it. When the Central Powers collapsed, the Soviet government in Russia renounced the Brest-Litovsk treaty and sent the Red Army on the march, to link up with revolts in Germany, an industrialized power ripe for takeover.
- ▶ The Red Army overran large parts of the Baltic republics. Ukraine, which had declared independence, was militarily subdued. A short-lived Soviet revolutionary government was declared in Hungary, led by Bela Kun, a Hungarian socialist who had been converted to Bolshevism while a prisoner of war in Russia.
- ▶ Even after these advances in the name of Bolshevism were reversed, Lenin was hopeful about the very unsettled political map of Eastern Europe. The hoped-for opportunity seemed to have finally come in 1920—that is, two years after the end of World War I.
- ▶ In August 1920 the Red Army, pushing across Poland, approached Warsaw. The Bolsheviks were so confident of victory that they had a new Polish government ready to go, made up of Polish comrades who accompanied them. Yet the expectation that Polish workers would greet the Communists was wrong, as they instead supported national independence.

- ▶ At the height of the crisis, the Polish forces counterattacked outside Warsaw. The Soviet advance was broken and turned into a devastating retreat.

Other Turmoil

- ▶ Besides the Soviet-Polish War, there were other kinds of turmoil as well. National activists in Ukraine and Belarus had wanted to win independence, but Bolshevik forces overran them and incorporated them into the Soviet state.
- ▶ Hungary, punished as a loser of World War I, lost two-thirds of its territory. Transylvania passed to Romania, enlarging that kingdom. The Austrian remnant of the Habsburg Empire became a republic, but a strange one, an independent state that did not want to exist. Most Austrians would have wanted to fuse their lands with Germany to the north, but the victors of World War I refused this.
- ▶ Poland's expansive policy produced a whole series of conflicts with neighbors. Poland and Lithuania clashed over the city of Vilnius. From 1918 to 1920, the city changed hands six times and then remained in Polish control. Poland also clashed with Germany, over where the borders should be drawn, and with Czechoslovakia.
- ▶ Throughout the region, such disputes had a crucial implication for the future: Embittered relations made collective security difficult or impossible if threats should arise again from Germany or Russia.
- ▶ The states of Eastern Europe were, however, often in agreement in resenting the treaties guaranteeing minority rights that the Western powers insisted on. The new postwar settlement left 25 million as minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania had populations where minorities made up roughly a third of the total. Concern about minority status was justified, but these states pointed out that the Western powers did not subject themselves to similar measures.

- ▶ Among the aftershocks of World War I was a largely forgotten war between Greece and Turkey. When the war ended, Greece and Turkey agreed on compulsory “exchange” of populations. About 400,000 Muslims were moved from Macedonia, and 1.3 million Greek Christians from Turkey were sent to Greece. Greece and Bulgaria also exchanged populations.
- ▶ In this forcible un-mixing of peoples, those who were displaced had never even visited the “homelands” they were being “returned” to. Although the Greek-Turkish exchange took place under international supervision, it included massacres and ethnic cleansing. In spite of this, European politicians later hailed population transfer as a successful model.

Dictators Rise

- ▶ Despite widespread turmoil, the new republics of Eastern Europe made significant advances. Many followed the Wilsonian ideal of building new democracies. Because Eastern Europe experienced a postwar population growth rate twice the European average, land reform and education for the new generation were key areas of progress. As members of the new League of Nations, another Wilson project, the states felt they had arrived.
- ▶ But in spite of their initial democratic orientations, almost all Eastern European states soon fell to dictatorships. Marshal Pilsudski became Poland’s ruler in a coup in 1926, and other dictators emerged in neighboring countries. When Pilsudski died in 1935, the regime turned to anti-Semitic trends, including economic boycotts and restricting Jewish access to education.
- ▶ Among these dictators were some unlikely candidates. Karlis Ulmanis, the dictator of Latvia from 1934, was a skilled agronomist who had studied and taught at the University of Nebraska. Romania experienced the rise of the mystical and brutal Iron Guard fascist movement, which assassinated the prime minister. In the Balkans, monarchism and dictatorship were combined. In Yugoslavia, the king imposed a royal dictatorship from 1929.

- In Albania, however, a strange dictator turned himself into a king. Ahmed Zogu, as the future monarch was originally known, was born into one of the most powerful clans in this traditional society. After the war, he participated in the hectic politics of the country, until he seized power in 1925. He named himself King Zog I in 1928. His rule was severe, and he was supported by the dangerous Italian Fascists—until they betrayed and overthrew him in 1939.



Ahmed Zogu

- There was a conspicuous and proud exception to this trend toward dictatorship, and that was democratic Czechoslovakia. The leaders of the state, especially Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, held a strong concept of their state as bridging Eastern and Western Europe, and being the easternmost representative of the democratic ideas of the West. Of course, Czechoslovakia faced internal challenges, as Slovak activists were uneasy with what they felt was their subordinate status. Other minorities like the Ruthenes, related to the Ukrainians, challenged their treatment.

Holodomor

- Once he was in control of the newly established Soviet Union, Lenin's successor Joseph Stalin launched a vast and violent campaign against what he saw as the backwardness of the region.

- ▶ This was a war against independent farmers, intended to revolutionize society and create a new Soviet man and woman. In short, productive peasants, labeled *kulaks*, were arrested and deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Stalin's regime set increasing quotas for crop deliveries to the state, but the remaining peasants slowed production or hid food.
- ▶ Yet Stalin was determined to crush resistance, and the result was the Terror Famine, or Great Famine, of 1932–33. Soviet troops seized grain from areas where hunger already threatened and closed off territories where resistance arose. Special squads of young Communist activists went into the villages to find hidden supplies of food to confiscate.
- ▶ Death by hunger set in on a massive scale. Instances of cannibalism showed the desperation of people. The famine caused an estimated 5–7 million deaths in Ukraine and other parts of the Soviet Union.
- ▶ These millions of deaths are remembered by Ukrainians as the *Holodomor*, which means “extermination by hunger.” And yet for decades, this traumatic historical episode remained largely unknown in the West. This in part was due to Soviet denials of the record and a concerted campaign undertaken at the time to hide the reality.
- ▶ Some Western journalists, like the intrepid Welsh writer Gareth Jones, tried to get the word out. But other Western journalists denied those reports. In particular, the Pulitzer Prize–winning reporter Walter Duranty, head of the Moscow bureau of *The New York Times*, dismissed the reality of the famine caused by the government.

More Arrests

- ▶ In the beginning, the Bolsheviks had promised different nationalities the right to self-determination. They expected that in the long run, a new society would be forged from the working classes of many peoples; ethnic differences would fade.

- ▶ In line with this policy, the Soviet state had at first established autonomous local units on the basis of ethnicity, individual languages, and cultures. But Stalin would reassert centralized control, and began thinking in nationalist categories.
- ▶ Stalin feared Ukrainian nationalism, and behind it, an alleged Polish conspiracy. Stalin focused on the fact that over a million ethnic Poles lived in the Soviet Union, and he suspected them of being a disloyal fifth column in a capitalist conspiracy against the Soviet state.
- ▶ Stalin ordered massive arrests of Poles and ethnic Germans. His forces wrenched about half a million people their homes and sent them into the interior.

READINGS

Macmillan, *Paris 1919*.

Snyder, *Bloodlands*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How could Eastern Europe's slide into dictatorship have best been prevented?
- 2 What was the most important change in Eastern Europe after the First World War?

Caught between Hitler and Stalin

On August 23, 1939, in a conference room in the Kremlin in Moscow, the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact decided the fate of Eastern Europe. This agreement opened the door to World War II. Yet for years, the Nazis and Soviets had hated each other as mortal enemies, and denounced each other in endless streams of propaganda. Their ideologies seemingly opposed one another. But now, on the contrary, they swore friendship. This lecture traces how that unlikely alliance came to be, and how it changed Eastern Europe forever.

Signing the Pact

- ▶ The scenes that unfolded on August 23, 1939 began as soon as the German foreign minister's plane touched down in Moscow. Joachim von Ribbentrop was sure that he was going to make history.
- ▶ Ribbentrop and his staff were rushed to the Kremlin, the red-towered center of government, and there they met with the dictator of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin. They would sign an official nonaggression treaty, but it had secret paragraphs as well, which divided Eastern Europe into Nazi and Soviet spheres of influence.



Joachim von Ribbentrop

- ▶ Hitler was to get half of Poland and the Baltic state of Lithuania, while Stalin would get the eastern part of Poland, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia, as well as Bessarabia, a territory in the south earlier ruled by Russia which had been incorporated into Romania after the First World War.
- ▶ Around midnight, the negotiations were completed. After toasts between the former enemies, the signing took place. Ribbentrop signed for Germany. The Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov signed for the Soviet Union, and the meeting broke up.
- ▶ When the world heard the news of the strange Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, often also called the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, it was a bombshell. Many suspected the secret clauses. Some keen observers also suggested that the pact revealed deeper affinities between the two dictatorships. For all their differences, common features made them both a part of a new, disturbing wave of modern politics, which came to be labeled *totalitarianism*.
- ▶ Totalitarian regimes, wielding ideologies that functioned like political religions, demanded not just passive loyalty, but active and total participation, blending terror and enthusiasm. They did not achieve total control, but sought it.

Worldviews of Hitler and Stalin

- ▶ What were the worldviews of Hitler and Stalin before their pact? For Hitler and the Nazis, Eastern Europe was the land of their future, and it became an obsession for them to conquer and colonize this area, which they referred to as the *Ostraum*, or Eastern space. Cleansed of Jews and Slavs, it would become the *Lebensraum* (or living space) of a purified Germanic master race.
- ▶ The Soviet Union, meanwhile, appeared in the paranoid, racist, and anti-Semitic worldview of the Nazis as a gigantic racial plot by which, the Nazis supposed, the Jews sought to dominate the world.

- ▶ By contrast, Stalin and his supporters saw the great struggle of world history not in terms of race, but in terms of class. History was hurtling toward a final catastrophic confrontation between capitalism and the vanguard of communism.
- ▶ Viewed through the prism of Communist ideology, Nazi Germany appeared just as one more member of the encircling capitalist world. In fact, in their open and undisguised brutality, the Nazis allegedly revealed themselves as representative of the last stages of capitalism.
- ▶ Given these respective views, how could Hitler and Stalin agree to cooperate? While each was cynically convinced that he was outwitting the other, they also both opposed the Western democracies. They both saw the status quo as being in need of wrecking, and each hoped to use the ensuing chaos to usher in the final victory of his ideology. And the first step was to redraw the map of Eastern Europe.

Hitler's Early Moves

- ▶ Hitler had taken the first moves toward the breaking of European borders soon after the Nazis came to power in 1933. He threw off the restrictions of Versailles by rearming Germany. In 1938, he pushed through the union of Austria to Germany, and the German army marched in without a shot being fired.
- ▶ Western leaders pursued a policy of *appeasement*, hoping to defuse Hitler's demands through compromise. Appeasement reached its peak over Czechoslovakia. Hitler demanded that the country's Sudeten Germans be allowed to join Germany. In fact, they were a pretext, as Hitler wanted all of the territory—the Sudeten Germans lived in the Sudeten mountain ranges, which formed Czechoslovakia's natural defenses.
- ▶ A diplomatic effort produced the Munich Conference on September 29, 1938. There, Hitler, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Italy's

Benito Mussolini, and Edouard Daladier of France came to an agreement that Czechoslovakia would cede the Sudetenland, making the country indefensible. (Czechoslovakia had no say.) Chamberlain returned to Britain saying that he brought “peace for our time,” but in fact it proved to be a slide into further aggression.

- ▶ In March 1939, Hitler’s armies marched into what remained of Czechoslovakia, set up a Nazi occupation administration in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, recognized an independent Slovak state, and prepared to exploit the area’s industry and Germanize half the people.
- ▶ Hitler next demanded the port city of Klaipeda from Lithuania. In March 1939, Lithuania handed over the port, but this would turn out to be Hitler’s last success short of war.
- ▶ Finally, Hitler turned on Poland. Hitler demanded that the port city of Danzig be turned over to Germany, along with territorial access. The Polish leadership refused, and were backed up by Britain and France, which had dropped appeasement. Incidentally, not everyone in the West was convinced that Eastern Europe’s problems were their own. As one French slogan put it, “Why die for Danzig?”

Nazi-Soviet Agreement

- ▶ On August 23, 1939, the Nazis and Soviets agreed on the partition of Eastern Europe. The negotiations moved fast, as Hitler wanted to be sure of Soviet intentions before attacking Poland. For the next 22 months, they were in practice allies.
- ▶ On September 1, 1939, after faking a border incident and claiming that the Poles had attacked first, German forces moved into Poland. Britain and France declared war, but could do little from afar. Polish forces fought back in desperation against Germany’s modernized and mechanized war machine.

- ▶ Polish cavalry fought with German infantry, before German tanks arrived and made their efforts pointless. Then on September 17, the Soviet Red Army invaded from the east, declaring that they were there to protect their Slavic brethren, the Belarusian and Ukrainian minorities.
- ▶ At Brest-Litovsk, the conquerors celebrated together, at this historically important location of Poland-Lithuania's earlier great fortresses. In the months that followed, economic exchange between Germany and the Soviet Union surged. Stalin turned several hundred German Communists who had fled to the Soviet Union back over to Hitler, and Lithuania was assigned to the Soviet Union in exchange for more Polish territory.
- ▶ The Nazis and Soviets also agreed on population transfers, in particular the removal from the Baltic lands of the Baltic Germans, with 66,000 of them leaving for Germany by Christmas 1939. This ended the 700-year history of those communities.

Nazis and Soviets in Poland

- ▶ As the German army and security forces moved in to Polish territory, they engaged in a deliberate murder campaign against civilians, which aimed to decapitate the natural leadership of the Polish people.



Einsatzgruppen, or strike forces, received lists of teachers, clergy, and political leaders, lists often prepared by ethnic Germans who had been neighbors. The strike forces then rounded up and shot these people. By the end of 1939, the Nazis executed up to 50,000 Poles, including at least 7,000 Jews.

- ▶ Part of Polish territories were annexed to the Reich, while others were put under harsh Nazi occupation. Masses of Jews and Poles were expelled from their homes to make room for German colonists.
- ▶ In the Soviet share of Poland, which was larger than the German part of the spoils, Soviet rule was introduced, and these lands incorporated into the Belarusian and Ukrainian Soviet republics. Mass deportations of those judged to be class enemies or Polish patriots began, numbering up to a million, as cattle cars full of families rolled eastwards to Siberia or Kazakhstan.
- ▶ From the masses of Polish prisoners of war, Soviet security forces sorted out the officers and others with leadership qualities, including priests, and deported them to western Russia. There, at Katyn and other sites, at least 21,000 were executed, many in soundproofed cellars, with a shot to the base of the skull. Skilled executioners could execute 250 men every night.
- ▶ In this chaos, refugees sought safety. Given the well-known anti-Semitism of the Nazis, Polish Jews often hoped to find refuge in the Soviet zone, but on reaching it they were sometimes so dismayed by the reality that they returned to the German zone.

Other Soviet Operations

- ▶ In the south, Romania reluctantly gave up Bessarabia and Bukovina to Stalin; these turned into the Moldovan Soviet Republic. In the north, Stalin moved to take over the Baltic states, to incorporate them entirely into the system of the Soviet Union.

- ▶ Stalin demanded that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania sign defense pacts with the Soviets and admit Red Army bases. Concluding that they had no other choice, the Baltic governments agreed. Stalin turned over the long-desired city of Vilnius to Lithuania as its new capital, but celebration was tempered by fears of Soviet intentions.
- ▶ On the other hand, when Stalin demanded territory from Finland, the Finns resisted, and in the Winter War used guerrilla tactics and ski troops to repulse much larger Red Army numbers. The Soviet officer corps had been devastated by Stalin's repeated purges and show trials, and the army's performance was weak. Even when forced to capitulate in March 1940, Finland remained independent.
- ▶ In June 1940, Soviet forces took over in the Baltic states. Now, new governments were organized under the supervision of Soviet envoys. Non-Communist political parties and organizations were banned, even the Boy Scouts.
- ▶ Communists gained control of the police forces and purged the officer corps. Communist organizations put together rallies and protests, sometimes including stationed Soviet soldiers, urging incorporation into the Soviet Union.
- ▶ In all three states, new elections were called, on the model of Soviet elections, where one voted in favor of a slate of candidates. In many places, the polls were not secret, and Red Army troops watched over the process. All were urged to vote, and internal passports were stamped to show one had voted—not voting was a sign you were an enemy of the Soviets.
- ▶ The Soviets falsified the election results, claiming some 90 percent approval. One Lithuanian district reported 122 percent voter participation. As planned, the governments then requested admission into the Soviet Union as new republics. Their independent existence was now snuffed out.

- ▶ Now the small, local Communist parties asserted their predominance. They confiscated factories and businesses, replaced Baltic currencies with the ruble, seized banks and farms, and revamped and distorted the education system to reflect their new rule. The Communists took over independent newspapers and issued lists of banned books.
- ▶ The next assault came with mass deportations in June 1941. Soviet secret police planned mass arrests to reshape local society, targeting supposedly undesirable elements. By one estimate, in all three Baltic countries, population loss in this first year of occupation was 129,000.

READINGS

Moorhouse, *The Devils' Alliance*.

Prusin, *The Lands Between*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Could the Nazi-Soviet Pact have been prevented, and if so, how?
- 2 Did Hitler and Stalin give up on their respective ideologies to bring about this Pact?

World War II: The Unfamiliar Eastern Front

In the West, it is still hard today to wrap one's mind around the sheer scale of the fighting on the Eastern Front during World War II. Eastern Europe was the contested territory across which repeated invasions, offensives, and counteroffensives raged. The greatest toll was in those areas that were invaded and reinvaded repeatedly, an area which Yale historian Timothy Snyder has memorably labeled the "Bloodlands." This lecture traces the damage wrought by those invasions, and closes with a look at how even after the defeat of the Nazis, Eastern Europe would remain in turmoil.

Hitler's Forces in Poland

- ▶ The ferocity of Hitler's Polish campaign and the Nazi occupation indicated how the Eastern Front would be distinctively different from fighting in the West. Hitler specifically ordered his soldiers to show no mercy. The restraints of rules of war would not apply here.
- ▶ Poland fell in short order. But the extinguishing of the Polish state did not mean that Poles stopped fighting. On the contrary, their contributions were meaningful, and not only as a symbol of resolve. For instance, 146 Polish pilots fought for the Allies at the Battle of Britain; a quarter million Poles joined British forces to fight in exile; and Polish scientists cracked the code to the German Enigma encryption system, then passed their method for decoding German messages on to the British.

Eastern Front Casualties

- An estimated 26 million people died on the Eastern Front.
- The Soviets suffered casualties 20 times larger than the British and Americans.
- Three-quarters of German casualties and nine-tenths of combat deaths were on the Eastern Front.
- Perhaps 4 million people remain missing in action to this day.

- ▶ After the fall of Poland, Hitler became the arbiter of Eastern Europe. During the 1930s, as a result of the global depression, which stunned the agrarian economies of Eastern Europe, Germany had won great economic influence through trade agreements. But now Hitler was in a position to redraw the map itself, and to use the lure of territorial gain to cultivate allies.

Hitler Makes More Moves

- ▶ After the destruction of Czechoslovakia, Hitler had passed those parts of Slovakia with Hungarian population back to Hungary, which he saw as a valuable ally, whose manpower he might draw on later.
- ▶ Hungary's own fascist movement, the Arrow Cross, was in favor of a close working relationship. Hungary, ruled by Admiral Miklos Horthy, joined the Axis Powers. Hitler rewarded Hungary by prevailing on Romania to give up some contested territory to Hungary, the northern part of Transylvania.
- ▶ This antagonized Romania, but Hitler was still able to bring Romania into the Axis, with the prospect of territorial gain at the expense of the Soviet Union in the looming next war. Hitler also sought to influence Bulgaria, which was ruled by a royal family of German ancestry.
- ▶ Hitler had already begun to plan Operation Barbarossa, an invasion of the Soviet Union. What a strange scene this produced: Entire trainloads of Soviet deliveries of raw materials passed to Nazi Germany, as German generals worked out the logistical details of their coming surprise attack.
- ▶ In advance of the attack, Hitler ordered the building of a special headquarters for himself so he could be closer to the action. Located in what is now northeastern Poland, this was the *Wolfsschanze*, the "Wolf's Lair." From here, Hitler planned and oversaw the fighting on the Eastern Front.



Wolfsschanze

- ▶ However, Hitler's planning and state of readiness were thrown off by events in the Balkans. Jealous of Hitler's military successes and hungry to gain some of his own, his Italian ally Benito Mussolini undertook a move that immediately cascaded into a disaster.
- ▶ Italy had already occupied Albania in 1939, deposing King Zog I. Now, in late 1940, Mussolini invaded Greece, but Greek counterattacks pushed the Italians back into Albania. Hitler had to come to the rescue of his partner, in the process delaying the timetable for the attack on the Soviet Union.
- ▶ Hitler prepared by bringing Bulgaria into the Axis alliance. In April 1941, Hitler invaded Yugoslavia and then Greece to secure the Balkans on his right flank. Within one month, Yugoslavia and Greece were beaten, but holding the occupied territories would prove most challenging to Hitler. Hungary was awarded the Vojvodina region, Bulgaria territory in Macedonia, and Italy also got chunks of former Yugoslav territory.

Hitler Attacks

- ▶ Now, after a delay of nearly 40 days, Hitler was ready to commence his surprise attack. On June 22, 1941, 175 German divisions moved from their prepared positions to invade the Soviet Union. Allied with Germany and also moving troops forward were Finland in the north and Romania in the south. In all, some 3 million soldiers, on a front of 1,800 miles, moved onto the offensive in the largest land invasion in history.
- ▶ Hitler wrote to Mussolini that he was relieved to have broken the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, which had given him mental agonies. Once again, Nazi propaganda turned on a dime from celebrating the “boundary of peace” to vilifying their recent associates, the Bolsheviks. The war was to gain living space for the German master race, *Ostraum*, space in the East.
- ▶ As this attack unfolded, Stalin was simply stunned. In spite of repeated warnings, Stalin had refused to believe that Hitler would attack. Only slowly did he recover and begin to rally the Soviet defense.
- ▶ The regime seemed to buckle in the first weeks. At first, some local populations in places like Ukraine and the Baltic states greeted the Germans as liberators—they did not yet fully understand the ideological energies of the invaders or what they were going to do next.
- ▶ Masses of Soviet soldiers surrendered, showing a disinclination to die for Stalin. In fact, some 5.7 million were taken prisoner. These responses were in fact based on misunderstandings. This was not to be a normal war, but rather an ideological total war. The goal would be not just to win, but to exterminate the enemy.
- ▶ That was made clear by Hitler in the planning for the invasion, as he issued the Commissar Order, a blank check for a war of extermination. Hitler told his High Command that this was not a normal military operation and international law would not apply. Rather, it was a racial war of annihilation. This war would be very different from the one on the Western Front.

- ▶ This became immediately evident in the treatment of those 5.7 million Soviet prisoners. In the first months, the Germans simply penned them up behind barbed wire and allowed them to starve or die of disease. Of the 5.7 million, 3.3 million died in captivity, a staggering mortality rate of 57 percent.
- ▶ The German armies raced forward. The northern group attacked Leningrad, besieging it for the next 900 days and causing a million deaths inside the city. The center group moved on Moscow, and the southern group moved through Ukraine, toward Crimea. The Germans captured Kiev, then Odessa and Crimea.
- ▶ In early November, Hitler gave orders to put the German economy back on a peacetime basis, certain that he had won. Yet the Russian winter caught the German armies unprepared, and Soviet forces counterattacked outside Moscow. The next year, 1942, German armies advanced again, penetrating the Caucasus Mountains, reaching the Volga, and a great industrial city called Stalingrad.

Supplies and Labor

- ▶ Germany calculatedly drew on the resources of occupied Europe. The German home front was spared food shortages until 1944 because it drew on the resources of conquered lands. Administrators accepted, in the so-called Hunger Plan, that tens of millions of Eastern Europeans might starve to death.
- ▶ Eastern Europe also provided slave labor. By the end of the war, there were some seven million “Eastern workers” drafted for labor for the German war effort. All this was prelude to the transformation of the East.
- ▶ In Ukraine and Belarus, economic exploitation was intense, and Nazi rule of astonishing brutality. In the Czech lands, the Nazis exploited the industrial resources, like the huge Skoda arms factories, for the war effort. They sorted the population to identify the Germanizable

individuals. When the governor of the occupied area, Reinhard Heydrich, was assassinated by Czechoslovak resistance fighters in May 1942, the Nazis responded by razing the village of Lidice and shooting all the men and boys.



- ▶ In Poland, the toll of the occupation was extreme. Through the war, six million Polish citizens lost their lives (half of them Polish Jews). This represented the worst per capita losses in Europe.
- ▶ A strong resistance movement grew in Poland, in part due to the long experience of underground organizing during the 123 years of partition. In 1942, the Polish Home Army was established, becoming essentially a secret state, loyal to the Polish government in exile in London. At its peak, it had about 300,000 people.

The Tide Shifts

- ▶ In general, resistance grew when it became increasingly clear that Germany would lose the war. When the German army besieging Stalingrad was surrounded by the Red Army in turn, and then surrendered in February 1943, the Soviets went onto the offensive on the Eastern Front.
- ▶ After the largest tank battle in history at Kursk in July 1943, the Nazis never regained the initiative, as the Eastern Front moved relentlessly westwards, towards Berlin. Belarus and Ukraine were devastated as the retreating Nazis sought to clear areas, emptying them of people.

- ▶ In these changed fortunes of war, Stalin began planning for new control of the areas the Soviet Union had lost, and for an expanded sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.
- ▶ To represent Soviet influence in more distant Eastern European countries, Stalin had foreign Communists specially trained for this role as the war continued, in a special school at Ufa in Soviet Central Asia, far from the front lines. Here, German and Polish Communists were lucky to be in favor with Stalin again.
- ▶ Many other foreign Communists who had fled to the Soviet Union had been purged as likely spies by the ever-suspicious Stalin. In fact, he so mistrusted Poles that in 1938 he had shut down the Communist Party of Poland (after murdering the leadership) and now laboriously needed to rebuild a loyal partner for future rule.
- ▶ Stalin also could activate foreign Communists who had been active in the Comintern, the international organization for spreading revolution established under Lenin. Yet Stalin mistrusted many of these activists precisely because they were abroad and beyond his grasp. Perhaps he was right to be suspicious, as became clear in the case of a foreign Communist who years later challenged Stalin, the Yugoslav rebel leader Josip Broz Tito.
- ▶ By 1943, the Allies recognized Tito as the leader of the overall effort to expel the Nazis. But incomparably more important to the Yugoslav Communist partisans was their standing in the eyes of Stalin, the leader of world communism. Yet Stalin distrusted even fellow Communists who were beyond his reach, so the situation was delicate.
- ▶ Tito sent a trusted lieutenant to Moscow to meet with Stalin in March 1944. This was Milovan Djilas, a partisan general. Later, Djilas published an astonishing memoir of his several meetings with Stalin during and after the war, entitled *Conversations with Stalin*.

- ▶ Djilas was surprised to see how nationalistic Stalin was, identifying himself with Russia and the Slavic peoples. Of course, behind the surprise lay the irony that Stalin himself was not ethnically Russian, but from Georgia in the Caucasus region. Over time, in following visits, Djilas grew desperately disillusioned with Stalin and even his own sense of cause. But in the process, he gained insights.
- ▶ At one point, Stalin told Djilas that what was happening in World War II was new and distinctive. He said, “This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise.” Here was an omen that even after the Nazis had been defeated, struggle for Eastern Europe would continue.

READINGS

Keegan, *The Second World War*.

Snyder, *Bloodlands*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What were the main factors that made the Eastern Front so much more destructive and costly in human life than the Western Front?
- 2 What were the main reasons for the Soviet victory on the Eastern Front?

The Holocaust and the Nazi Racial Empire

Under the cover of World War II, the Nazis and their collaborators turned Eastern Europe into a killing ground. Starting in 1941, the Nazis enacted their Final Solution, a program to destroy entirely the Jewish populations of Europe. Eastern Europe became the site for most of the Holocaust, which took the lives of some six million Jews. Other groups, like the Roma, suffered as well. This lecture looks at the underpinnings of the Nazis' plans, as well as the terrible toll they took on Eastern Europe.

Nazi Operations

- ▶ Since coming to power in Germany in 1933, the Nazis had escalated and radicalized the measures they took to create a new kind of polity, a racial state. Germany was to be a purified home for an alleged "Aryan" race, in particular purged of Jews, whom the Nazis demonized in their paranoid racial worldview.
- ▶ The Roma, or so-called Gypsies, were also declared to be racially polluting and became the targets for Nazi terror. Roma recall the genocide as the *Porajmos*, or "devouring."
- ▶ With the outbreak of World War II, the Nazis' policies moved to murder. Within Germany, killing programs against the handicapped gave specialists experience in methodical destruction of human life.
- ▶ When Hitler attacked Poland in 1939, special strike forces called *Einsatzgruppen* were sent in behind the armies in Operation Tannenberg, which was meant to decapitate Poland's national leadership. At least 7,000 Jews were among those killed. Beyond this, the Nazis confronted Poland's large Jewish population of three million, 10 percent of the population. Jews were brutalized and deported.

- ▶ At first the Nazis considered plans for a Jewish reservation near Lublin, but this variant was dropped in favor of more radical measures. The Nazis stole Jewish property and herded the dispossessed people into a series of ghettos, where hunger and disease became the order of the day.
- ▶ These measures then were radicalized further when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. Again, *Einsatzgruppen* mobile killing units followed the front lines, with orders to destroy Jews and others considered enemies of the new order. They engaged in mass shootings.
- ▶ The *Einsatzgruppen* and their collaborators killed one million Jews by the end of 1941. They also targeted Gypsies, Communists, and the handicapped. Surviving Jews in the occupied areas were forced into ghettos, including the one in Minsk (with 100,000), and in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Riga.

Collaborators

- ▶ In this murder campaign, the *Einsatzgruppen* found helpers. Collaborators from among the Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, and others worked with the Nazis in the task of murder.
- ▶ German army units on the Eastern Front also helped in the unfolding genocide, contrary to the widespread postwar myth of the “clean” conduct of the German army on the Eastern Front. The shtetls, which had been a distinctive civilization in Eastern Europe, were methodically destroyed.
- ▶ For the victims, an added horror was the fact that people among their former neighbors took part in the killing, as described by Princeton historian Jan Gross’s book, entitled *Neighbors*, about the massacre in Jedwabne in Eastern Poland.
- ▶ The Nazis recruited further helpers from the masses of Soviet prisoners of war they had taken. These recruits were called *Hilfswillige*, or *Hiwis* for short, meaning “volunteer helpers”; collaborating with the Nazis was a way for them to escape POW camps.

Aggression Increases

- ▶ On January 20, 1942, the fateful Wannsee Conference in Berlin made the entire campaign more methodical, setting up death camps on a vast scale, as in Auschwitz. Convened by Reinhard Heydrich, the meeting systematized the operations into a comprehensive Final Solution. Europe's Jews were to be shipped to the East and exterminated there. Adolf Eichmann was put in charge of the logistics of transport.
- ▶ Of the six extermination camps, four were intended entirely for destruction of humans: Chelmno, Belzec, Treblinka, and Sobibor. At Auschwitz and Majdanek, concentration camps adjoined the extermination facilities. Those sent to the camps selected for extermination were herded into gas chambers disguised as showers, where they met their deaths.



- ▶ The Nazis were eager to annihilate the Jews of Hungary, who faced persecution but not deportation from their government. When Hitler discovered that Hungary was using back channels to leave the war, the Nazis seized control. Adolf Eichmann then engineered the rounding up and transporting of Hungarian Jews. Eventually the Nazis gassed some 400,000 of them.
- ▶ Bulgaria was also an ally of Nazi Germany, but it did not turn over its smaller Jewish community of some 50,000. Despite anti-Jewish laws, Bulgaria even attracted Jewish refugees from abroad. However, Bulgarian authorities did deport Jews from the areas of Macedonia and Thrace the Nazis awarded them at the expense of Yugoslavia and Greece.
- ▶ Another Nazi ally, Romania, had a large Jewish community, but did not agree to deport them to German control, instead instituting its own fierce anti-Semitic policies. The internal fascist movement, the Iron Guard, hated Jews ferociously, blaming them for the loss of territories in the war. They rampaged in Bucharest.
- ▶ Romanian forces engaged in massacres in territories taken after the invasion of the Soviet Union, Bessarabia, and Bukovina. Romanian soldiers in Odessa burned thousands of Jews to death. Tens of thousands of Jews were murdered in Transnistria under Romanian administration. Some estimates of the number of Jews killed by Romanians go as high as 300,000.

Resistances

- ▶ Among the intended victims, there were striking instances of resistance. There were uprisings in the camps and ghettos. The most famous is the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943.
- ▶ On the eve of Passover, April 19, 1943, when the Germans advanced on the ghetto, the Jewish fighters started their uprising. They hid in attics and cellars, raced along narrow passageways, moved into the sewers, and appeared and disappeared to strike at the Nazi forces and then pull back.

- ▶ The Nazis planned to quell resistance in some three days, but it ultimately needed more than a month. They cut off all access to the ghetto; turned off the water, electricity, and gas; and proceeded to destroy the ghetto quarter by quarter by setting houses on fire. Long before the end, the fighters understood how vanishingly small their chance of survival was, but their overriding aim was to uphold their dignity.
- ▶ Young Jews who were able to escape the confines of the ghettos could make for the forests. It is estimated that 20,000 Jews fought in partisan units, either mixed or entirely Jewish in the woodlands of Eastern Europe. Others were active in Belarus.
- ▶ In some cases, non-Jews sought to come to the help of Jews. Throughout Eastern Europe, thousands of individuals and families dared to take in fleeing Jews. To do so was perilous, as discovery meant the Nazis would kill the entire family trying to help.
- ▶ A famous case of rescue involved Oskar Schindler's factory in Krakow. Jews working for this Sudeten German industrialist were protected and saved, in a precarious set of subterfuges that Schindler was able to pull off.
- ▶ One individual from a neutral country, the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, worked to save Jews, helping them to safety. In Hungary, as the deportations of the Jews of Budapest were being prepared, Wallenberg handed out Swedish protective passports to Jews and provided sanctuary in a building that he designated as Swedish. He may have saved around 100,000 Hungarian Jews by his interventions.
- ▶ Other aid was more organized. In occupied Poland, the underground Polish Home Army in 1942 created Żegota, or the Council to Aid Jews, whose operatives helped Jews escape the ghettos and hide to survive the war.

The Nazi Blueprint

- ▶ The Nazis' strategy looked to a future in which they proved victorious in World War II. This would allow them to transform the *Ostraum*, the space in the East. As their population expanded and as they were racially purified through eugenic policies, the Germans would spread into living spaces of the East as colonial overlords.
- ▶ Specifics of the anticipated future can be found in the *Generalplan Ost*, also known as GPO or General Plan East. This blueprint of empire, an actual blueprint of Nazi plans, was produced in the SS planning office and reviewed by Himmler in June 1942.
- ▶ The GPO projected what Eastern Europe would look like 25 years after the war. The Jews were to have been destroyed. Later, the planners calculated with an icy detachment, it would be necessary to deport to Siberia 31 million non-Germans.
- ▶ At first, 14 million non-Germans would be kept in the area as slave laborers, but it would be important not to let them mix with the German master race. Germans would be housed in 36 settlements linked by military highways. When he reviewed these proposals, Himmler found them not severe enough and ordered more work to be done.
- ▶ In his headquarters, Hitler subjected his followers to long, tedious, and terrifying rambling monologues, in which his obsession with the East featured heavily. Eastern Europe was, he said, a "magnificent field of experiment."
- ▶ Once settled by Germans, it would feature broad highways to link it to the Reich. Non-Germans were not to be taught German or brought civilization, but rather were to remain "in their own pigsties," as Hitler put it.
- ▶ Many of these projects were not merely on the drawing board, but were already under way. *Volksdeutsche*, ethnic Germans from Eastern

European countries, were being resettled in the new areas that were called the German east. Slavs were already being decimated.

- ▶ So-called re-Germanization programs (in German, *Wiedereindeutschung*) were already underway to sift through the biological material of Eastern European peoples who might have German ancestry. Nazi racial experts declared that perhaps half of the Czech population was racially valuable, versus only 3 percent of Russians and Poles.
- ▶ In the Baltic lands, the Nazis also thought they could perceive a racial hierarchy. Latvians and Estonians, who had long been under the rule of a German upper class, the Baltic barons, were seen as racially valuable. Planners thought half of Estonians and a quarter of Latvians might be absorbed into a greater German people. Lithuanians, by contrast, were judged unworthy. In this racial quest for hidden Germanic blood, it is estimated that around 20,000 children were kidnapped from Poland, to be brought up in Germany.

The Aftermath

- ▶ Nazi fantasies started to fade after 1943, with the realization that Nazi Germany was going to lose the war. At a frenzied pace, the SS tried to hide the evidence of the camps, dug up buried bodies to burn the evidence, and sought to destroy facilities. But how could one possibly realistically hide a crime so vast?
- ▶ The surviving inmates were often dragooned back towards Germany in death marches that took a continuing toll. In January 1945, the complex of Auschwitz was abandoned as the Red Army approached. The date on which the camp was liberated, January 27, is designated International Holocaust Memorial Day.

- As the Nazi reign drew to a close, what was clear was the sheer vastness of the murder that had been committed. The numbers exceeded human understanding. It is estimated that 90 percent of Polish Jews (nearly three million) and about 18 percent of Polish Roma were killed. In the Baltics, some 80 percent of Jews and more than 35 percent of Gypsies were killed. A great part of the diversity that had marked Eastern European history was torn out and destroyed.

READINGS

Dwork and Van Pelt, *Holocaust*.

Gross, *Neighbors*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What factors led to the steady radicalization of Nazi anti-Semitic policies and plans?
- 2 What would lead someone to become an accomplice or a rescuer in a situation of genocide?

Postwar Flight and Expulsion

The ending of World War II should have brought peace and a return to some normalcy, longed for in Eastern Europe. In Britain, liberated France, and in the United States, the war's end did bring the promise of stability and normalcy. Not so in Eastern and Central Europe. That Europe was on the move, and not voluntarily. Millions upon millions were caught up in a storm of forced movement. Borders suddenly changed, populations fled or shifted, and the political map was remade.

Devastation and Uprisings

- ▶ The last stages of the war brought unimaginable devastation. In Ukraine, Ukrainians fought on both sides, in the Red Army and in German-sponsored units. As the Red Army moved in, Romania changed sides in August 1944. That same month, Poland was also a battleground, and became the site of another revolt against the Nazis, the Warsaw Uprising.
- ▶ The 1944 uprising had been planned by the Polish Home Army to take place at a decisive moment, to win back Polish independence. The uprising began on August 1, as the Red Army approached.
- ▶ The Home Army's expectation was that in a day or two they could beat back the already-retreating Germans, and in the interval before the Red Army entered the city, become its masters. Yet, crucially, the Red Army stopped short, at the Vistula River, and waited, claiming it needed to rest.
- ▶ The Allies asked to use Soviet air bases to refuel their transports to drop supplies to the Home Army, but Stalin refused. The Nazis moved forces in to crush the revolt, which lasted 63 days. More than 200,000

inhabitants of Warsaw died, and at the end the German army dynamited the city to leave it devastated.

- ▶ Red Army soldiers engaged in mass rapes as they moved through Poland, Hungary, and into Germany. Even in Yugoslavia, where the mass partisan movement led by Tito contained Communist allies of the Soviets, rapes were common.

Conferences

- ▶ The looming political question was what the map of Eastern Europe would look like after Nazi Germany was crushed. At summit conferences in Tehran and Yalta (while the war was going on) and in Potsdam after Germany's defeat, Britain, the U.S., and the Soviet Union negotiated the postwar order. That order featured redrawn borders, spheres of influence, and the allegedly humane transfer of ethnic German populations from Eastern Europe.
- ▶ From the start in 1941, Stalin insisted that he be allowed to retain the territories he had gotten through the Nazi-Soviet Pact with Hitler: the Baltic states, eastern Poland, and Bessarabia. At the Tehran Conference in November 1943, Churchill found the solution. Everyone would move west to compensate Stalin. Poland would be lifted up and moved hundreds of miles westwards, losing eastern lands, and gaining territories from Germany.
- ▶ The next year, in 1944, Churchill flew to Moscow to work out the so-called Percentages Agreement. On a scrap of paper, Churchill and Stalin divided up Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. The Soviets were to have 90 percent influence in Romania and 75 percent in Bulgaria, while Britain would have 90 percent influence in Greece. Yugoslavia and Hungary would be split evenly.
- ▶ These wartime negotiations culminated at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 held in Crimea, between Churchill, Stalin, and a dying

President Roosevelt. The main issues concerned Poland's new borders and establishing zones of occupation in Germany. The leaders signed the Declaration on Liberated Europe, promising national sovereignty and democracy for the future. Stalin agreed to free elections in Poland; later, he disregarded all promises.

- ▶ In line with these plans, Poland moved westwards, as Germany lost eastern provinces. What had been the easternmost corner of Germany, East Prussia, now was divided between Poland and the Soviet Union. The city of Königsberg was renamed Kaliningrad, after one of Stalin's henchmen, and the territory was likewise labeled Kaliningrad Oblast, or district. Germans in these areas fled or were driven out.
- ▶ Ten weeks after the defeat of Germany, in July 1945, the Allies met again at Potsdam, in an imperial hunting lodge just outside shattered Berlin. At the Potsdam Conference, the leaders ratified what we today would call *ethnic cleansing*. The conference agreed on the redrawn German eastern border, validating the expulsions of Germans as “population transfer,” with the stipulation that it should be “orderly and humane” in practice, harkening back to the population exchanges between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s as a model.

Moving Germans

- ▶ The Potsdam Conference actually approved a vast process that was already taking place, the ethnic cleansing of some 12–14 million ethnic Germans who fled or were expelled from their homes in Eastern Europe. Some estimates go as high as 16.5 million. In the process, it is estimated that from half a million to two million died or were killed. The turnover of territories was anything but humane and orderly.
- ▶ This process historically was an outgrowth of Hitler's policies, and was viewed as revenge. The ethnic Germans, or *Volksdeutsche*, had been privileged by Hitler. Nazi crimes had been far more severe and murderous, but now the principle of collective responsibility exacted a terrible price, in what was an age of great suffering. The expulsion,

remembered in German as *die Flucht und Vertreibung* came in two stages: first, a period of flight and wild mistreatment, then a stage of more coordinated resettlement from places like the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia.

- ▶ The easternmost part of Germany, East Prussia, was quickly overrun, faster than the long convoys of refugees heading west could move. Tanks crushed them outright. Some refugees took a most dangerous route to escape, moving on the ice of the frozen Vistula Lagoon that runs parallel to the Baltic Sea. Nearly half a million were able to escape over the ice, but in many other cases carts and horses broke through and the refugees drowned.
- ▶ More than a million fled across the Baltic by ship, but Soviet airplanes and submarines targeted these. One such ship, the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, was torpedoed in the Baltic Sea, and went down with over 9,000 refugees and crew.
- ▶ In other areas, ethnic Germans were not expelled but appropriated. Some 70,000 ethnic Germans from Romania were deported to the Soviet Union as war reparations in human form, to help in rebuilding the shattered country. Other such deportations also followed. Of the more than three million German prisoners of war held in the Soviet Union whose labor was also to be a reparation, the last were released only in 1956, 11 years after the war's end.
- ▶ In territories given to Poland, such as Silesia, Masuria, and Pomerania, ethnic Germans were forced from their homes, driven westwards. Violence and murder became common. In a terrible turnabout, Nazi concentration camps were used to detain the expellees, and mistreatment, typhus, and hunger took a terrible toll on these new inmates.
- ▶ In all, some 7.6 million Germans left Poland. Some 200,000 were expelled from Hungary. Ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia, the Black Sea region, Ukraine, and the Carpathians were expelled. Suicides grew frequent among those who could no longer bear the abuse.

- ▶ In Czechoslovakia, during the war, the role of the Sudeten Germans in breaking up the state was remembered bitterly. The Czechoslovak president in exile, Edvard Benes, insisted on the need to “liquidate” the German problem after the war.

- ▶ Prague Germans were rounded up. In some towns, mass violence against German civilians took place, revealing the pent-up hatred. One evening in Brno, some 20,000 Germans were given 10 minutes to pack and marched towards the Austrian border, and then confined in the open air for months of suffering before expulsion.



- ▶ By 1947, two and half million Germans had left Czechoslovakia, before and after the Allies gave sanction at the Potsdam conference. Hungarians from Slovakia also were volunteered for resettlement.

More Population Movement

- ▶ Largely unknown in the West today, another large population movement was forced in what had earlier been eastern Poland. These were the borderlands of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which Stalin had won in the Nazi-Soviet Pact.
- ▶ In the region of Volhynia, Ukrainian nationalist partisans sought to remove all Poles from the region, terrorizing them and killing about 50,000. In the end, almost one and a half million Poles left Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine.

- ▶ In the city contested by Poles and Lithuanians (*Wilno* in Polish, *Vilnius* in Lithuanian), the ethnic balance changed dramatically as a result of this turmoil.
- ▶ Many of these displaced Poles from the east were then resettled in the new western Poland, in the areas taken from Germany and turned over to Poland. Within its new borders, Poland sought to quell the Ukrainian guerilla movement in the southeast and deport that minority. In 1947, the Polish army enacted Operation Vistula, which forcibly moved about 140,000 ethnic Ukrainians to the new territories in the West, which had been German.

Displaced Persons

- ▶ An estimated 30 million so-called displaced persons milled about in the center of Europe, confined to refugee camps, uncertain of what the future might hold. Many of them were Eastern Europeans who had fled the advance of the Red Army.
- ▶ Stalin demanded the repatriation of people from the areas now under his control. As the Allies discovered with time, Stalin often wanted refugees repatriated to punish them for disloyalty to his regime. Even Soviet POWs who had been liberated from German camps were shipped back not for victory parades in Moscow, but instead to be sent to the Gulags, for their survival suggested treason to Stalin.
- ▶ This also involved non-Russians. In May 1945, the British in Austria forcibly returned to the Soviets tens of thousands of Cossacks who had fought for the German side, along with Georgians and others from the Caucasus. Many were accompanied by their families. Some killed themselves before they could be turned over.
- ▶ The Allies also turned over to the Yugoslav partisans Croatian Home Guards, and refugees from Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Those considered enemies were promptly executed by the tens of

thousands. British officers who had followed orders to turn over the refugees found that this haunted their nightmares years later.

- ▶ By the late 1940s, the United States, Britain and other countries accepted displaced persons, allowing them to build new lives in new homelands. An element of Eastern European history now spread worldwide.
- ▶ Among the displaced persons were Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Bitterly, many discovered that returning home was doubly impossible for them. First, the communities they had come from no longer existed. Second, it became tragically obvious that anti-Semitism had not burned itself out even in the murderous years past, but continued after the war.
- ▶ Postwar attacks against Jews were reported in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. Most notorious was the violence in Kielce, Poland, on July 4, 1946. There, troops and a rioting crowd killed 42 Jews and wounded many others. They were sparked by the revival of the ancient blood libel against the Jews claiming that they had sought to kill a Christian child.
- ▶ The environment in their former homes proved so hostile that two-thirds of Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust left. Similar tragic stories played out in other Eastern European countries, and in the years that followed, the new Communist governments established here kept that tradition going. Thus, much later, in 1968, the Polish Communist party expelled most of its Jewish members.

READINGS

Davies, *Rising '44*.

Snyder, *Bloodlands*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did mass expulsions take place at the end of the Second World War, but not at the end of the First World War?
- 2 How is the experience of children, like that of the “wolf children,” distinct from adults’ experience and perceptions of war?

Behind the Iron Curtain, 1945–1953

As the Cold War descended just after World War II, outside forces would determine Eastern Europe's reality. Western powers wished to help devastated countries rehabilitate, while Stalin saw the postwar chaos as a chance to strengthen his grip throughout Eastern Europe. This lecture starts with two pivotal scenes that helped set the stage for postwar Europe. It then examines the process of Stalinization, whereby Stalin expanded his power through gradual political steps mixed with strokes of brutality. Some countries and people resisted, though, and we'll look at them as well.

Two Scenes

- ▶ In the aftermath of World War II, two scenes were particularly poignant.
 - March 5, 1946: In Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill gave a speech that warns of a coming East-West division. He called for Western democracies to confront their recent ally, Stalin. This message was unwelcome to many, but proved prophetic.
 - June 10, 1947: In Moscow, Stalin angrily ordered Czechoslovakian leaders to turn down America's European Recovery Program. This was a massive infusion of aid also called the Marshall Plan. Stalin argued that this was in fact an American conspiracy to isolate the Soviet Union. The leaders of Czechoslovakia rejected the American plan.
- ▶ The story did not end on the day of the Marshall Plan showdown. In the years that followed, the question hovered: What if they had participated? From 1947 to 1954, the American taxpayer sent \$12 billion to the 16 European countries, mostly in the west, who had participated in the plan.
- ▶ By the middle of the 1950s, it was clear that Western Europe and even the western portion of defeated Germany were starting a dramatic

economic recovery, while Eastern European reconstruction was achingly slow. What if the countries of Eastern Europe had been free to make their own choices?

- ▶ The Cold War denied them choice. Just after the Second World War ended, the wartime alliance of Western democracies and the Soviet Union split apart. And the military, political, economic, and social clash of the Cold War spread worldwide. For over 40 years, until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War set the agenda internationally.

Stalinization

- ▶ With the end of the war, Eastern European countries were united in shared misery. Massive numbers of people were dead; political structures had collapsed; and economies lay in ruin. For instance, at one point Hungary faced a daily inflation rate of 207 percent—the prices of everyday goods doubled every 15 hours.
- ▶ Another immediately visible reality was the massive power of the Red Army, which had played the predominant role in destroying Nazi Germany. Some 11 million Soviet soldiers stood in Eastern Europe.
- ▶ Within the expanded borders of the Soviet Union, Stalin finished digesting the territories he had gained through his pact with Hitler: the Baltic states and Bessarabia, now in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.
- ▶ In these first years after the Second World War, Stalin took a flexible approach to exerting control of Eastern Europe. This has been described with marvelous detail by the Pulitzer Prize–winning historian Anne Applebaum in her book entitled *Iron Curtain*. These first years of seeming pluralism in fact coincided with careful preparations behind the scenes for the creation of Stalinist regimes. The reality was that by betraying previous promises of free elections and national independence for liberated Eastern European countries, Stalin imposed communist regimes.

- ▶ This creeping Stalinization took place in stages. Later, the Hungarian Stalinist leader Matyas Rakosi described the approach as “salami slice tactics,” steps that in isolation did not alarm or provoke panic, but that taken together proved decisive.
- ▶ Eastern European Communists who had spent the war in the Soviet Union were sent back to their homelands. There, they were to help create so-called National Fronts, where they cooperated with socialists and farmers’ parties.
- ▶ In these coalitions, the Communists increasingly dominated the interior ministry posts, those bureaucracies that controlled the policy and the army. Once they had these in their hands, they used them to purge even potential non-communist opposition.
- ▶ Meanwhile, the National Fronts engaged in reconstruction policies that commanded considerable popular support. These included abolishing the last monarchies in Romania and Bulgaria, more land reform, and the nationalizing of industries.
- ▶ Once their control was centralized, the Communists would dispense with their earlier allies in the National Fronts, and either close their parties or fuse them into a movement they would dominate. Anything outside of state control became a target. That included churches, the media, universities, charitable organizations, clubs, and workers’ unions. The Boy Scouts, along with countless other youth organizations and the Salvation Army, were eliminated.

Accelerated Divisions

- ▶ At the international level, more events accelerated the emerging divisions across Europe. First, in 1947, the battle lines were drawn. In March, President Truman announced what became the Truman Doctrine, the pledge to help with economic and military aid countries threatened by Communist insurrection or expansion.

- ▶ Then, in September, an institution called the Cominform (short for Communist Information Bureau) was founded in Poland. Though the Cominform declared that its purpose was to share information, it seemed to many that it was a new venture to spread ideology and expand Communism.
- ▶ In 1948 Stalin precipitated a Berlin crisis, using the city as a sensitive pressure point. To forestall the emergence of a state in Western Germany, Stalin closed off Western access to Berlin in June 1948, cutting the railroad and highway links. This proved to be a public relations disaster, as the Americans and British conducted a dramatic airlift of supplies to aid the two million people in the western part of Berlin. After 11 months, Stalin lifted the blockade.
- ▶ Another pivotal event was the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia. By 1947, electoral support for the communists began to decline, in part because of the Soviet Union vetoing Czechoslovakian participation in the Marshall Plan. The result was the Communist party in Prague seizing power at the end of February 1948.
- ▶ One result of these heightened tensions was the 1949 founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a Western alliance. This mutual defense pact, which included the U.S., Canada, and 10 Western European countries, established that an attack on one NATO member would be an attack on all.
- ▶ By 1948, Eastern European countries seemed firmly under Stalinist control. There were, however, two countries that slipped away from the fate of Eastern Europe.
 - In northern Europe, Finland lost territory to the Soviets after the Second World War, but did not have a communist government imposed on it. Instead, it promised neutrality in the Cold War and accepted Soviet influence in its foreign affairs. This resulting “Finlandization,” a term many Finns resent, spared the country an Eastern European fate.



President Truman signing the document implementing the North Atlantic Treaty at his desk in the Oval Office.

- The other fascinating case is that of Austria. After the Second World War, Austria was spared the division that Germany underwent, in part because Austrians argued that they had been the first victims of Hitler. Later, with the withdrawal of the Allies and Soviets, Austria became independent and neutral, but bound to Western Europe in other ways. Austria, though further to the east than Czechoslovakia, was Western.

Yugoslavia Challenges Stalin

- A strong challenge to Stalin's monopoly of control arose in the communist bloc itself in 1948, in Yugoslavia. During World War II, Yugoslavian Communist partisans under Tito had largely defeated the Germans themselves, which made them more independent in their home country than many Eastern European communists who had returned home with the Red Army.

- ▶ That sense of independence and confidence, personified in Tito, frustrated Stalin, who was ever alert to challenges. Stalin demanded that Yugoslavia concentrate its economy on agriculture to supply Soviet industry, but Tito refused, aiming for self-sufficiency. Stalin demanded that Yugoslavia federate with Bulgaria, but Tito again refused.
- ▶ In February 1948, portraits of Tito that were displayed in Romania as a sign of admiration for a fellow communist disappeared. The next month, the Soviets recalled their advisors from Yugoslavia, claiming that they were “surrounded by an absence of comradeship.” Stalin ordered Tito to come to Moscow to explain himself. Tito refused. A chill now descended on these former partners.
- ▶ Stalin used the Cominform and other Eastern European communists to put pressure on Tito to get back in line. He considered invasion plans. The Yugoslav communists reacted by tightening their own control, often in brutal ways. They arrested 14,000 comrades who supported Stalin. They abused their enemies with striking propaganda.
- ▶ By June 1948, Tito’s break with Moscow was out in the open. It attracted American attention, and the U.S. sent financial aid to Yugoslavia, to exploit this split in the Cold War. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, the U.S. sent military aid to Yugoslavia, so that during the global emergency Stalin could not intervene there. This confirmed that Tito was gone from the Soviet bloc for good.

Show Trials

- ▶ Stalin’s fury at the audacity of the Yugoslavs took murderous form in a whole series of purges and show trials. In Romania, one of the first female foreign ministers in the world, Ana Pauker, was put on trial, forced to denounce herself, and ejected from the party. Here, her Jewish background may have made her a target as well.

- ▶ The classic show trial was in Czechoslovakia in 1952. The so-called Slansky trial had been prepared for three years. It mostly involved Czechoslovakian Jewish party officials, especially Rudolf Slansky. After ritual proceedings, 11 were executed. Anti-Semitism was being mobilized again.
- ▶ In Hungary, Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty, who had refused to allow schools run by the Catholic Church to be taken over by the state, was arrested, tortured, put on show trial, and imprisoned for life.

Stalin's Support and Death

- ▶ It's worth asking: How did Stalinism gain support? Aspects of the National Fronts had popular backing, like the land reforms, which split up large estates and divided them up to give to the landless or poor.
- ▶ The initially small Communist parties in Eastern Europe grew, as party membership became a route to advancement. Others were attracted by the egalitarian promises of the new regimes, and identified with them.
- ▶ The great Polish poet, writer, and 1952 Nobel Prize winner Czeslaw Milosz drew on his own personal experience and observations to deliver a stunning psychological study of Stalinism in Poland. This was his book *The Captive Mind*, published in 1953.
 - Serving Stalinism offered its adherents the power of insider knowledge, the sense of being on the right side of history.
 - The costs included an inner brutalization, the loss of freedom, national identity, and trust. To understand this grim period, Miłosz is indispensable.

- Stalinism's prime mover, Stalin himself, died in 1953. He seemed to be on the verge of another wave of terror, this time directed against the Jews. Soviet authorities had announced the discovery of a so-called Doctors' Plot. It was alleged that government doctors, mostly Jewish, had planned to poison the Soviet leadership. But before the purge could get going, Stalin unexpectedly died.

READINGS

Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944–1956*.

Milosz, *The Captive Mind*.

QUESTION

- 1 If Eastern European countries had been able to participate in the Marshall Plan, how would later history have been altered? What was Stalin's single most important impact on Eastern European states in the postwar era?

Forest Brothers: Baltic Partisan Warfare

World War II officially ended in Europe with the unconditional surrender of Germany on May 8, 1945. But in Eastern Europe, the fighting continued long after, for more than a decade. Combat in the Baltics was at its height from 1945–1953. This lecture traces the origins of the Forest Brothers, who fought against the Soviets in the Baltic woods. It then looks at tactics each side used, and closes with tales of how the fighting receded but left a huge impression on the Baltics.

Fighting in Kalniskes

- May 16, 1945: In the forest of Kalniskes, in southern Lithuania, Soviet security forces moved forward to capture guerrilla fighters. Hidden in the forest were some hundred partisans led by a man with the code name Lakunas, “The Pilot.”



- ▶ Among them were women. As the fighting rages, the wife of the leader, a former schoolteacher known by her pseudonym Pusele, “Little Pine Tree,” takes over for a machine gunner who has been hit. She firing until she too is shot and killed.
- ▶ The Soviet security forces were heavily armed and several times more numerous than their opponents. They killed about half the guerrillas. And yet, as darkness falls, the surviving partisans, in a blaze of gunfire, broke through the cordon surrounding them and retreat into the night, to fight again another day.
- ▶ This was a key moment in the emerging Cold War, but it remains almost entirely unknown in the West. In the lands along the Baltic, in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, war did not end in 1945. For more than a decade after, a guerrilla war raged in these formerly independent states, which had been taken over by Stalin as a result of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939.

Beginnings of the Forest War

- ▶ The unevenly matched Baltic forest war began when the Soviet advance during World War II pushed the Germans out of the Baltics. The forest war started in Estonia in late 1944, and then spread southwards.
- ▶ In the Baltic forests and swamps, the guerrillas were also called *partisans*, meaning someone who supports one or another side in a conflict, or *Forest Brothers*, after their natural hiding places.
- ▶ Among the factors that encouraged the partisan movement in the Baltics was the chaos of the end of German occupation. In the case of Lithuania, German attempts to draft young men into defense forces toward the end of the war meant that lots of military-age men had already fled to the forests.
- ▶ As Soviets came back, they in turn sought to forcibly draft men for the Red Army as it plunged toward Berlin, an apocalyptic battle that demanded more soldiers. Men took to the forests to avoid being arrested or press-ganged.

- ▶ After their return to the Baltic countries in 1944 and 1945, the Soviets organized more mass deportations. Stalin was convinced that almost anyone here was by definition a collaborator with the Germans and a class enemy. The answer was mass expulsion to Siberia and Central Asia. Estimates for the entire period run between 200,000 to 400,000 people deported.
- ▶ The result was that increasing numbers people fled to the forests and organized resistance. The resistance was strongest, most effective, and largest in Lithuania. Catholicism, a target of the Soviets, provided additional motivation here; there were even some priests in the guerrilla ranks.

The Forest Brothers

- ▶ Forest Brothers hid in bunkers in the woods. Over the years, these became more elaborate hiding places. The hideouts did have drawbacks.
 - Forest Brothers had to stay inside after snowfall; otherwise they'd leave easily traceable footprints.
 - Injuries and illness were profoundly dangerous, as medical help could be scarce.
 - The partisans had to rely on captured weapons for arms, first German, then Soviet ones. Ammunition was a perennial problem.
 - For food, the partisans depended on friendly villagers or on relatives.
- ▶ The average career of a Forest Brother is estimated to have been no more than two years before either being killed or slipping back into civilian life. The latter was especially common in the 1950s, when the struggle came to be seen as hopeless.
- ▶ Before that, the Forest Brothers grew into a mass movement. It is estimated that between 1945 and 1952 in Lithuania, about 100,000 people participated. In Latvia, the numbers were estimated at 40,000,

and in Estonia at 30,000. Thus, in all the Baltic countries, about 170,000 were involved at one time or another in this resistance.

- ▶ The units ranged in size from small groups of two or three to larger units of up to 800 men. Usually, when volunteers banded together, former military men would rise to the top because they were the ones with applicable experience.
- ▶ Another feature of these units was that there were often many siblings in one group, which meant that a family's sons could all be killed in one skirmish. Moreover, partisans who died of wounds or illness often were given secret burials, hidden from the Soviet Security Forces.
- ▶ Women were also included among the partisans, especially as carriers of messages between units. They also helped nurse wounded fighters.

Juozas Luksa

- ▶ For an individual, what did it mean to go to the forest? We have the account of Juozas Luksa, who used the code name Daumantas, after an ancient prince. Through secret channels, in the summer of 1945 he set up a meeting with Forest Brothers to arrange to join them.
- ▶ At the village of Pajiesis, he waited by the Jiesia River as darkness fell. Three men, wearing remnants of Lithuanian army uniforms from the interwar independence period, came towards him, fording the river. They were armed to the teeth.
- ▶ One of the men turned out that to be Luksa's distant cousin, who he did not even know was involved in the partisans, as all of them went by code names. The names could be those of medieval grand dukes from pagan times, or the names of forest animals or birds, or something else entirely, like Tarzan, Vampire, or Onion.
- ▶ Now that Luksa was recognized, he was trusted, and the partisans would take him to their headquarters. But first they gave him a revolver, so if

they were ambushed on the way, he could kill himself to avoid capture and torture.

- ▶ As they all moved together into the dark forest, the man with the largest feet went last, and was careful to step onto the footprints that had come before, so that pursuers could not make out their numbers. That is how a partisan existence began, and usually it was a short one.

Guerrilla Hopes

- ▶ The hope which kept the guerrillas going for many years was the expectation that there would be assistance from the West. Oblivious to compromises on the highest international plane, the guerrillas trusted in the declaration of the Allies that after victory there would be no territorial aggrandizement, no changes of borders against the wishes of the people, and a return to self-government.
- ▶ Alternatively, for years many of the partisans also lived in the expectation of a Third World War between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union.
- ▶ But help from the West did not come. Instead, what came was long-distance betrayal. Seeking help from the U.S. and Britain, guerrilla fighters breached the Iron Curtain to enter the West, crossing Poland into Germany, with requests for aid. Western intelligence agencies, like the CIA (which had been founded in 1947) and Britain's MI6, grew interested in them because they could infiltrate what was now Soviet territory.
- ▶ At a time when many in Eastern Europe dreamed of getting out, these agents were assigned the task of breaking into the Iron Curtain in 1951. They were to report back on Soviet military preparedness measures and deliver priceless human intelligence. Yet a terrible pattern emerged, as numbers of them were caught upon arrival. Most perished because they were betrayed.

- ▶ Years later, we learned that Harold Adrian Russell “Kim” Philby, a high-ranking British MI6 officer, had actually been a Soviet spy and informed on these returning exiles. Due to his treachery, they had simply been sent to their deaths to no purpose.
- ▶ Luksa, the man whose moment of joining the Forest Brothers we observed a moment ago, was among those who died. He had gone to the West, and was sent back to Lithuania, parachuted in with others, and killed.



Forest Brother and Soviet Tactics

- ▶ The Forest Brothers avoided attacking the regular forces of the Soviet Army, and concentrated on attacking the security apparatus of the Soviet government, the interior ministry's secret police, the NKVD, and MGB, the precursor of the KGB. These were the forces in charge of internal repression.
- ▶ The Forest Brothers specialized in surprise attacks against the security forces. They sought to impede Soviet policies like collectivization of farms, the deportation actions, and Soviet elections. They also targeted local people who collaborated. In Lithuania, it is estimated that between 4,000 and 13,000 people suspected of working for the Soviets were killed from 1945–1952.
- ▶ The Soviet interior ministry's secret police army aimed to turn this into a civil war. They organized special units from among the local population that would be devoted to hunting down the Forest Brothers. These were called “Destroyers” (*Iztrebiteli* in Russian). Their challenge was to divide the guerrillas from the population at large.

- ▶ One pernicious way in which the Destroyers did this was by taking young local boys along when they combed the woods searching for the partisans. In this way, the forest brothers would be reluctant to fire at their own people.
- ▶ The Soviet security forces also set up bands dressed like Forest Brothers who brutalized the population, to ruin their reputation. Alternatively, if a family aided such a fake group, it would be proof that they were opposed to the Soviet regime, and the household would face deportation.
- ▶ When some partisans were killed in firefight, the Soviet security forces would drag their mutilated bodies to nearby village squares and churchyards and display them there publicly. If anyone came by to see them and broke down and cried, they in turn would be arrested and deported, since they were probably relatives.

End of the Movement

- ▶ Over time, as help from the West did not come, the Forest Brothers movement petered out. When Stalin died in 1953, the deportations halted, so this motivating factor stopped being operative. When amnesties were declared, many fighters slipped back into civilian or “legal” life. But not all. As late as 1965, there was an engagement in the Lithuanian forests.
- ▶ Overall, the costs to the Soviet forces had been severe. Total losses to the Soviet side were estimated at 40,000 by a Russian source.
- ▶ Other effects were long-lasting but hard to measure. It is often argued that the perception of the Baltics as dangerous areas full of so-called bandits actually staved off larger Russian colonization in the postwar decades.

- ▶ Remarkably, the last partisan fighter in Estonia died still at large in 1978. This was August Sabbe, who had gone to the forests while the Second World War was still raging. He remained on the margins for decades, refusing to integrate in to a Sovietized Estonia.
- ▶ Police discovered him on a riverbank in 1978. After a scuffle, he threw himself into the river. It's unclear whether he drowned as he tried to escape yet again or if he eluded his pursuers by drowning himself deliberately. Instead of trumpeting their success, the security forces hid the news, almost as if they were embarrassed by their triumph.

READINGS

Daumantas, *Forest Brothers*.

Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States*, pages 124–146.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Do you see any similarities or contrasts with other insurgencies in world history?
- 2 Was the model of Finnish resistance in the Winter War applicable in the Baltic states?

Life in Totalitarian Captivity, 1953–1980

As the Cold War settled in and became a fact of life, people spoke of the Eastern Bloc, the communist countries separated from the West. A distinct way of life developed there. The East German communists labeled it *Real existierender Sozialismus*—that is, “actually existing socialism.” This was said to be a new stage in the history of humanity, striving towards full communism. This lecture looks at the reality of life in communist societies, juxtaposed with the promises and commands of those societies’ leaders.

Black Market Blue Jeans

- ▶ In 1977, the Yugoslav police announced that they had just stopped an invasion on the long border with Italy—an invasion of blue jeans. The incident started when alert Yugoslavian border forces spotted a single, slender unauthorized wire hanging across a river separating the two countries and two economic systems.
- ▶ Under cover of darkness, traffickers on the Italian side hooked huge bales of denim trousers onto the wire and carefully swung them across to Yugoslav territory. From there, the jeans would be spirited into Eastern Europe, and then these products were spread through black market channels far and wide.
- ▶ Communist governments condemned the Western style of jeans. For Eastern European governments, jeans, for all their proletarian origins, were associated with movie stars and idols like John Wayne, Elvis Presley, and Marilyn Monroe, and thus they were a symbol of the West and its decadence. The denim revealed the curves of the human shape, and this sensual frivolity offended serious revolutionaries, the puritanical, and the politically correct.

- ▶ But it was exactly this that made Western jeans, especially American and Italian ones, so desirable to youth in Eastern Europe, the quintessence of cool and hipness. Soviet bloc imitations of the jeans were of poor quality, leaving the American and Italian versions in high demand.
- ▶ Those scarce jeans were among a whole range of hard-to-obtain products and services in a system that promised abundance. Additionally, the state commanded the correct choices people were to make, yet societies found workarounds and disregarded authority.

Control

- ▶ Eastern Europe, for all its diversity, was actually united in the second half of the 20th century by being the subject of a social experiment, controlled from above.
- ▶ In the states of Eastern Europe, political orthodoxy was mandatory. Because the Communist Party advocated an ideology for the total revolutionary transformation of society and individuals—the creation of the new man and woman—all aspects of life were politicized in the view of the party. The party aimed for total control, without ever achieving that ideal.
- ▶ The fraternal socialist tie, as it was called, could create problems in states with recent experience of Soviet actions or older historical memories of Russia. Consider Poland, which had been moved physically westwards by Stalin. Poles now always had to consider the possibility of German demands for the return of territories, unless the Soviets backed them up. Poland's situation was conflicted.
- ▶ Another key example was the German Democratic Republic, declared in 1949 in the Soviet zone. The East German communist state was hampered by memories of how it had come into being: the Soviet conquest and the campaign of mass rape that followed, committed by some Soviet troops.

- ▶ Yet East Germany proved the most loyal of the Soviet allies, and some 300,000 Soviet soldiers were stationed there, on the front lines of the Cold War. East German leader Walter Ulbricht led the Politburo, the central committee of the Communist Party, where real power lay.



- ▶ Ulbricht declared repeatedly to his comrades, "Everything has to look democratic, but everything has to be controlled by us." Even more emphatic was the 1950 Eastern German party anthem, with the refrain, "The Party is always right!"
- ▶ The avant-garde role of the party and the regime meant that officials were allotted special privileges. Immediately, the emergence of a ruling class negated promises of the abolishment of inequality. These people were called *apparatchiks* in Russian, or *Bonzen* in German.
- ▶ The regimes of the Eastern Bloc increasingly attempted to appeal to nationalism, which Marx had seen as a fading factor. Instead, Communist regimes presented themselves as the authentic champions of peoples.
- ▶ With the end of World War II, the states of Eastern Europe became far more ethnically homogenous than they had ever been before. Bulgaria's communist leaders continued the trend, expelling their Turkish minority of some 150,000 people. Anti-Semitic policies in different states were also part of this tactic.
- ▶ Communist states persecuted religion houses of worship; monasteries were closed. In East Germany, the government even developed its own rituals to displace earlier Christian conventions. The state established

the *Jugendweihe*, or “youth dedication,” a coming of age rite with the regime taking the place of the divine.

Expressions of Power

- ▶ The power of the regime, based on the correctness of the party and its roadmap to the bright future, was on display in many different forums. In particular, on May 1 of every year, International Workers Day, vast parades and processions with ranks of marchers and waving red flags became a durable tradition.
- ▶ The East German state became famous worldwide for its prowess in Olympic competitions. Vast resources were dedicated to sports training as a source of prestige, and large numbers of athletes were doped, sometimes without their knowledge. The human consequences were severe: Some female athletes discovered that their abuse meant they could not later have families, and some involuntarily took on male characteristics through the chemical treatment.
- ▶ The highest expression of power came when concentrated into a cult of personality around one leader. Chief among these was Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu, in power as leader of both the Communist Party and president from 1967 until his bloody end 22 years later in 1989.
 - He and his wife, Elena, proved to be a formidable and ambitious power couple. Ceausescu gained popularity by moving Romania away from the Soviet Union, tapping into nationalist pride.



- The Securitate secret police imposed strict control on the population. Harsh economic measures in the 1970s left the country miserable, while the couple groomed their son for leadership. The Ceaușescus lived like royalty, with an estimated 70 houses, hunting lodges, and palaces.

Economics

- ▶ The states of Eastern Europe followed the Soviet model by introducing centrally planned economies. The plans masked vast irrationality and inefficiency, which was further heightened by the Stalinist cult of the *hero worker* or *shock worker*, who through ideological will was supposed to achieve unprecedented feats of production in mining, agriculture, and industry.
- ▶ As in the Soviet Union, agriculture was to be organized like a factory, and collectivization drives meant that private farms and the small holdings of peasants were taken away. Poland was the key exception here, as this would have led to mass resistance.
- ▶ The housing shortages of the region, especially after the ravages of the Second World War, were met with some expedients that proved problematic. First came the tradition, also introduced from the Soviet Union, of subdividing single family homes and apartments into communal apartments, the so-called *kommunalkas*, with shared kitchens and bath facilities. These apartments had little privacy.
- ▶ Later, large concrete block housing developments and high-rises were built. Only after buildings had gone up did the planners fully understand the psychological depression created by unrelieved uniformity. Here, too, Poland was a striking exception: Warsaw was painstakingly reconstructed, down to the smallest historical details, using—of all things—old baroque paintings.

- ▶ The inadequacies of what was supposed to be a planned economy of prosperity showed up in chronic shortages of toilet paper, meat, and of course of those desirable blue jeans. Standing in long queues for scarce products offer became a universal practice.
- ▶ Constant comparison to the West's consumer wealth made these scarcities a volatile topic. In East Germany, West German TV was readily viewable, and in Estonia, Finnish media.

Surveillance

- ▶ Secret police forces in all these states functioned as the “sword and shield of the Party.” The secret police cultivated an image as omnipotent. Especially feared were East Germany's Ministry for State Security, known as the Stasi, and Romania's Securitate.
 - The Stasi created what has been called the most spied-on society in history, using masses of “unofficial coworkers” as informers, keeping tabs on dissidents, on friends, family, even spouses. An estimated 274,000 people worked with the Stasi from 1950 to 1989.
 - The Securitate in Romania made a special cult of what was called “conspirativity,” of cloaking their actions and networks in such secrecy that even agents working on the same case would not know of each other's existence. Among the many targets of the Securitate were the Roma minority, wandering in the countryside as had been their traditional way for centuries.
- ▶ By the 1970s, electronic listening technology meant that both the Securitate and the Stasi moved towards an emphasis on listening through countless surveillance systems. In fact, the ruling family in Romania, the Ceausescus, spent considerable time secretly bugging their children.

Jokes

- ▶ Jokes against communism pervaded these countries. Created and then told and retold under circumstances of high pressure and risk, they were far funnier then than they can seem now. Here is a sampling:
 - Regarding economics: What's the difference between capitalism and communism? Capitalism is man's exploitation of man, while communism is the exact opposite.
 - Regarding the rewriting of history: How can we know what the future will be like, when we can't even know what the past will be like in ten years?
 - Regarding the feared police: A man goes to the Stasi to report that his parrot is missing. They tell him that the parrot is not their responsibility, and that he should speak to the city authorities. The man agrees, but before he leaves, he says that he wants to stress that he in no way shares his parrot's political opinions!
- ▶ Scholars debate whether such jokes undermined the system by mocking it, or whether they stabilized the system by allowing people to vent their frustrations without openly challenging the regime.

Albania

- ▶ Albania stood out for its move towards total isolation. The dictator Enver Hoxha gripped the country for 40 years. When Marx imagined backward rural regions unsuited for communism, he might have imagined Albania, with its rugged mountains, long blood feuds, and great poverty.
- ▶ Hoxha was considered an intellectual in a society where illiteracy was rife, and he led the communist partisan movement during the war. The regime stayed Stalinist even after the Soviet Union itself de-Stalinized.



- ▶ In fact, Albania became an ally of Maoist China, making it an outpost of Chinese influence in Eastern Europe. When China strayed from what Hoxha considered true Marxism, Albania went into deep isolation from the entire world, a fortress country with a siege mentality.
- ▶ Inside, the Sigurimi secret police kept a close watch on society and ran labor camps, which held targets and their families. Albanians claimed they had created the first pure socialist economy in the world.
- ▶ Convinced that Albania faced a world full of enemies, beginning in 1967, Hoxha began the bunkerization program. More than 700,000 concrete pillbox bunkers were built, one for every four people. There were 24 bunkers for every square kilometer in Albania, and they remain there today.
- ▶ Hoxha died in 1985, having won the record of longest-ruling dictator in Eastern Europe. Yet just six years later, in 1991, Albanians would topple his statue in Tirana as they made another revolution.

READINGS

Djilas, *The New Class*.

Lewis, *Hammer and Tickle*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Were all political jokes equally dangerous?
- 2 When secret police aimed to reshape societies, what were the main ways they did this?

Power of the Powerless: Revolts and Unrest

LECTURE

17

The 1950s and 1960s were marked by repeated revolts in Eastern Europe, even in the face of regimes that demanded total obedience to their ideology. Each revolt, even as it ultimately failed, seemed to offer lessons for the next round of disobedience. A wider movement of dissent and principled unrest arose across all Eastern European countries. As we will observe, persistent resistance in Eastern Europe often fed on both historical memories and fresh hopes for the future.

East German Uprising

- ▶ In June 1953, just after the death of Stalin, an uprising began in East Germany. It acquired the compelling name in German of the *Arbeiteraufstand*—that is, the Workers' Uprising, against a communist regime that claimed *it* was the true representative of the working class.
- ▶ The protestors demanded truly free elections, democracy, and the resignation of the communist boss Walter Ulbricht. By June 17, the strike had grown into full revolt and spread to other cities, especially Halle and Leipzig. Almost half a million workers went on strike in 593 worksites, and 140 government buildings (including city halls, party and police branches) were occupied by protesters.
- ▶ The East German state asked the Soviets to help quell the revolt. On June 18, Soviet tanks rolled in. Protestors threw rocks and bottles at the tanks. The protests were crushed with violence and mass arrests. Over 200 civilians and some 100 police died. The Soviets arrested 6,000 people, over half of them striking workers. The party leadership was purged, and 20 party officials were executed for not stopping this crisis earlier.

- ▶ This proved a victory that was disastrous for the Soviets, even in symbolic terms. Instead of the Leninist party being the vehicle of that savior class, the workers had revolted against it. The lesson was that the state came first and would use violence and foreign tanks to assert its absolute primacy.
- ▶ But the Soviets were determined to hold the line in the Cold War, and in 1955, they engineered the Warsaw Pact. The Warsaw Pact included Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Albania, and the Soviet Union. The pact made vividly clear that the Soviet Union was the big brother, ready to re-impose order.

The Thaw

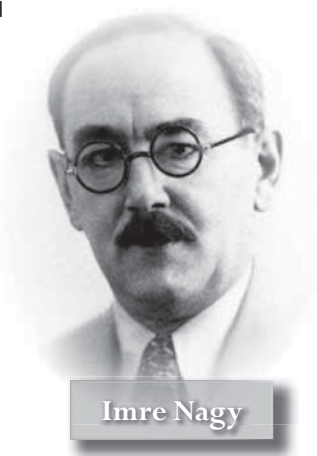
- ▶ The next major crisis was not slow in arriving. In 1956, the new Soviet premier, Nikita Khrushchev, inaugurated the “Thaw,” stepping back from Stalinism. He started with his secret speech at the 20th Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. In it, Khrushchev criticized Stalin for his cult of personality and abuse, especially of fellow communists.
- ▶ But there was a lot Khrushchev did not include in his speech, like his own role as one of Stalin’s helpers. Nor did he discuss events like the Ukrainian famine, which is remembered as the Holodomor. This was an incomplete reckoning with the past.
- ▶ Polish officials leaked the secret speech to Israeli intelligence, who handed it to the CIA, and soon it was common knowledge. Throughout Eastern Europe, the speech raised expectations for change and a move away from Stalinist forms of rule.



Nikita Khrushchev

Unrest in Hungary

- ▶ Workers in Poznan in Poland gathered for mass protests in June 1956, which arose from basic economic questions. Polish security forces crushed the unrest, but it next flared up in Hungary.
- ▶ The Hungarian People's Republic had been under the rule of the Stalinist leader Matyas Rakosi. But when Stalin died and Khrushchev pressed for change, Rakosi was forced out. A new set of Hungarian communist leaders, with Prime Minister Imre Nagy at the fore, tried to de-Stalinize the country.
- ▶ Expectations among the population at large soon outran their plans. Young intellectuals invoked Magyar heroes of the past with the founding of the Sandor Petofi Circle, harkening back to the revolution of 1848. This debating society started raising fundamental questions of the future.
- ▶ Soon, on October 23, 1956, student protests began in Budapest and grew in size. Workers and ordinary city dwellers joined in, until the crowds along the Danube River at the parliament included 200–300,000 people.
- ▶ A few hours later, Soviet forces stationed in Hungary moved in, fearing a repetition of the Berlin Workers' Uprising. This inflamed the populace even more and turned protest into an armed revolt.
- ▶ On October 25th, a crowd gathered in Kossuth Square next to the huge parliament building to hear Imre Nagy. Hungarian and Soviet soldiers shot at them, and at least 70 died. A new government was announced, with Nagy as prime minister.



- ▶ The Hungarian Workers' Party dissolved itself, and the parties that the communists had banned now came back to life. Nagy announced that the AVH, the secret police, were being dissolved. Their Soviet trainers, KGB officers, promptly fled the country in a special airplane.
- ▶ Soviet troops were withdrawn from Budapest to calm the population. This, however, increased the sense of the protestors that they were winning, and now they demanded that Soviet troops pull out of Hungary and that Hungary withdraw from the Warsaw Pact.
- ▶ The protestors asked for help from the West. The U.S., Britain, and France, however, were entirely engaged in the Suez Canal Crisis in the Middle East, and could not spare attention. In the streets, protestors killed AVH officers and party officials, as the situation escalated further.
- ▶ Then, on November 4th, Soviet tanks were sent in again in what was called Operation Whirlwind. They shelled Budapest. In an early morning radio broadcast directed at a global audience, Nagy announced that Hungary was leaving the Warsaw Pact and appealed to the United Nations to defend Hungarian neutrality.
- ▶ In the fighting in the streets, young Hungarians battled armored vehicles. Even in this mismatched clash, the Hungarians found various ways to disable the tanks. They spread oil on the streets so that tanks would skid and get trapped between buildings.
- ▶ Young boys and girls ran up to tanks and shoved metal bars into the tank treads so they could not move. The fighters dug ditches and filled them with gasoline that would be lit when a tank tried to cross. Young women of Budapest hid in doorways until a tank ran into an obstacle, and then ran up to attack the tank with homemade bombs.
- ▶ In the week that followed, around 2,500 protestors were killed and some 20,000 wounded, and nearly 700 Soviet soldiers died in the fighting. Prime Minister Nagy fled to the Yugoslav embassy, seeking asylum; later he was tricked into coming out and was executed. In the crackdown afterwards, 35,000 arrests were made, and over 200 executed.

- ▶ A mass exodus followed across the border to Austria. About 200,000 fled the country, nearly two percent of the entire population. A witness to this aftermath was James Michener, who called it “one of the most amazing experiences of my life.” Collecting refugee interviews, in 1957 he published his book *The Bridge at Andau*, which still makes for astonishing reading over half a century later.
- ▶ The Kremlin picked Hungarian communist leader Janos Kadar to rule Hungary. It would not be easy to repair the situation. In the years that followed, Kadar slowly introduced economic reforms, including the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) to move away from Stalinist centralism. More economic freedoms produced rising living standards. Many Eastern Europeans admired Hungary from afar.



Janos Kadar

The Berlin Wall

- ▶ On August 13, 1961, erection of the Berlin Wall began without warning. The East German state had already closed the land border with West Germany, but continued to hemorrhage people through the open city of Berlin, as almost 2.7 million Germans fled west.
- ▶ With Soviet permission, Walter Ulbricht ordered the building of the wall, which was labeled the “Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart.” Its real aim was to keep people in. Border troops guarded the wall with orders to shoot to kill.
- ▶ Eleven days after the wall was built, the first one to be shot was a young worker, Gunter Litfin, killed trying to escape. Some 900 people died along the entire border. The wall blasted the myth of the state’s popular support and it became the symbol of East German communism.

The Prague Spring

- ▶ The next crisis started with high hopes. This was the so-called Prague Spring of 1968 in Czechoslovakia. The Slovak reformer Alexander Dubcek became head of the communist regime in January 1968. He and fellow reformers pursued a course called “socialism with a human face,” with loosened restrictions on speech and less centralized government.
- ▶ In response, on the night of August 20–21, 1968, the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies mounted a surprise invasion, called Operation Danube. Half a million troops poured in.
- ▶ In the streets, Prague citizens argued with Soviet soldiers atop their tanks. There was no mass resistance like in Hungary, but still 100 Czechs and Slovaks were killed, and allegedly 12 Soviets. The next year, in the central Wenceslas Square in Prague, a history student named Jan Palach set himself on fire to protest the invasion and died.
- ▶ Nevertheless, the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev now codified the Brezhnev Doctrine, which said once a country had gone over to the communist camp, there was no leaving. The internal crackdown in Czechoslovakia that followed went by the bitterly ironic name of “normalization.”

More Unrest

- ▶ After these scenes of protestors battling Soviet tanks in Berlin, Budapest, and Prague, a whole other range of examples of unrest grew in Eastern Europe in the 1970s.
- ▶ In 1972, in Soviet Lithuania, a young man named Romas Kalanta burned himself to death on the central street in Kaunas in a desperate protest.
- ▶ Milan Kundera’s novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* reflected on the Prague Spring, its suppression, and what it meant for human lives.

- ▶ The permanent rebel in Yugoslavia, Milovan Djilas, steered into repeated confrontations with the communist cause he had earlier helped to power.
- ▶ Religious protest was active. In Lithuania, for 17 years an entire underground network secretly published *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*, a terse inventory of police persecution of believers.
- ▶ In Romania, the ethnic German community was subjected to discrimination, and the dissident writer Herta Muller transmuted the personal experiences of state terror into art. After refusing to inform for the Securitate, mistreatment finally led her to emigrate to West Germany. She went on to win the Nobel Prize in 2009.
- ▶ Inspired by the youth counterculture sweeping the United States and the West, hippies appeared in Eastern Europe, as far away as Riga, Latvia, and Lviv in Ukraine.
- ▶ Among the many forms of dissidence and unrest, one of the most powerful expressions came from a Czech playwright. He would spend years in prison, yet after the collapse of communism became president of his country. This was Vaclav Havel, born in Prague in 1936.
- ▶ Havel wrote the 1965 play *The Memorandum*, which revealed the unconscious absurdity of bureaucracy. He played an active role in the 1968 Prague Spring. As a result, when “normalization” descended on his country, his works were banned. He was arrested repeatedly and imprisoned from 1979 to 1983.
- ▶ Before his imprisonment, Havel was among the founders of a Czechoslovak group called Charter 77, which insisted that the communist government honor the human rights pledges it had signed in the Helsinki Accords in 1975.
- ▶ Havel wrote a powerful essay in 1978, entitled “The Power of the Powerless.” Havel called the system ruling Eastern Europe *post-totalitarian*. This system involved the constant and total manipulation of

society, so that people would confirm, mouth the official slogans, and live a lie, following the ruling ideology.

- Immense potential power lay, Havel suggested, in being unafraid to live as a responsible individual, in truth.

READINGS

Kundera, *The Joke*.

Michener, *The Bridge at Andau*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What lessons did the revolts of 1953, 1956, and 1968 seem to offer?
- 2 Which of these revolts was most damaging to the standing of Eastern European communist regimes, and why?

Solidarity in Poland: Walesa's Union

LECTURE

18

In 1980, the firing of Polish dockworker Anna Walentynowicz helped spark nationwide protests against Poland's Communist regime. This lecture follows Walentynowicz, the leader Lech Walesa, and other discontent Poles as they rebelled. It also examines the background to these events, describing several skirmishes in the lead-up to Walentynowicz's and Walesa's nationwide movement. The lecture also includes appearances from the religious leaders Pope John Paul II and Father Jerzy Popieluszko, who became inspiring figures for the Poles. This all forms another chapter in Poland's history of uprisings.

An Ill-Informed Firing

- ▶ One could argue that the fall of Communism started with one scene in Poland, in the summer of 1980. The scene occurred at the gates of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, Poland's biggest harbor city. Sixteen thousand workers gathered to demand that Anna Walentynowicz, a tiny widow in her early 50s, be reinstated to her job as a welder and crane operator in the shipyard.
- ▶ On August 7, 1980, Walentynowicz was informed that she was to lose her job because of what the officials considered antigovernment activity—that is, championing workers' rights. Her firing was actually the culmination of a nearly decade-long battle between this strong-willed woman and the bosses of the shipyards.



Anna Walentynowicz

- ▶ Because she was never afraid to confront management, Walentynowicz grew in stature in the eyes of her fellow workers. Though she was slightly built and only 4 feet 11 inches tall, in their estimation she was a towering figure of strength.
- ▶ Lately, she had antagonized the authorities by helping to build a monument at the gates of the Lenin Shipyard to the memory of workers who had been shot 10 years before during a strike there. When the police arrested and threatened her, she allegedly told them, “Your days are numbered, and I couldn’t care less.”
- ▶ At first she had actually been a supporter of the Communist regime’s transformation of Poland. In fact, she was among those shock workers that were celebrated in Stalinist propaganda, in her case because of her feat of over-fulfilling her work quota by 270 percent.
- ▶ Yet time in the workplace led to her increasing outrage at the injustices she noticed around her, like the time a manager took workers’ bonuses for himself. She started to speak up about these abuses, and discovered that she had a talent for organizing her coworkers. They listened to her.
- ▶ In the late 1970s, she joined a new group calling itself the *Komitet Obrony Robotnikow*, or KOR, the Workers’ Defense Committee, which had branches in Polish industrial cities. Among its members in Gdansk was a young electrician recently fired from the Lenin Shipyard, Lech Walesa. KOR published underground newspapers, organized legal help for workers persecuted by management, and inspired protests.



Lech Walesa

- ▶ After the news of her firing, outraged fellow workers went on strike to get her reinstated, and Lech Walesa as well. The workers locked themselves in to the shipyard, behind its heavy metal gates. Walesa was at home at the time, and so he needed to rush to the shipyard and scale a wall to join the strikers.
- ▶ Members of KOR in Warsaw drove all the way to Gdansk to communicate their support, and this proved to be a vital moment, because here intellectuals like the historian Bronislaw Geremek were demonstrating their unity with workers, across classes, in a common cause.
- ▶ The strikers presented an immediate demand to the shipyard's director: Walentynowicz must be part of the negotiations. But, having been fired, she was at home, so the director's limousine was sent to get her.
- ▶ Now the movement snowballed as the strikers outlined new demands, including the right to organize free trade unions independent of the government, as well as the release of political prisoners, freedom of speech, and salary increases.
- ▶ Soon others flocked to the shipyard, like farmers and idealistic young women looking to help. In all this, Walentynowicz came into the role of "strike mother," encouraging the protestors. The strikes spread across the country, most importantly to the coalmines of Silesia.
- ▶ On the last day of August 1980, the government backed down, and signed the Gdansk Agreement or Social Accord, which accepted the demands of the strikers. Then, on September 17, the workers followed up their success with the official founding of the independent trade union called *Solidarnosc*, or "Solidarity." In the next year, its growth was explosive, reaching nearly 10 million members.

Background to the Strike

- ▶ After Stalin's death, Poland had proved restless. Before the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, strikes in Poznan had broken out and were crushed

by tanks. That same year, masses of Poles participated in a pilgrimage to that nationally important holy site, the monastery of Jasna Gora, to visit the icon of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa.

- ▶ In 1966, Poles marked a thousand years since Christianity had come to their country. The government sought to sabotage some of the celebrations, in one case stealing a reproduction of the icon of the Black Madonna.
- ▶ The 1960s and 1970s were marked by endemic economic shortages. These provoked the strikes of 1970 along the Baltic seacoast, which the government met with bullets, including at the Lenin Shipyard. To meet some consumer demands, the government wagered on international trade and took foreign loans, but the economy was dragged down further and inflation grew. By 1974, Poland, once productive agriculturally, became a net importer of food.
- ▶ By 1976, Poland saw strikes and protests over price increases on food. Harsh crackdowns led to the founding of the KOR organization. KOR brought together intellectuals and workers, who engaged in secret organizing and publishing.
- ▶ Such activities got a big boost with the unexpected news that the new Catholic pope elected in 1978 was a Polish archbishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla. He became Pope John Paul II. This was the first time in over 400 years that the pope was not Italian.
- ▶ Pope John Paul II returned to Poland in June 1979. In his talks before massive crowds and in sermons, the pope's repeated message was "be not afraid." This urging had a cumulative effect. In 1980, the exiled Polish writer and poet Milosz was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, another cause for pride.
- ▶ Another part of the context of the rise of Solidarity had to do with stirrings elsewhere in the Communist bloc, particularly Vaclav Havel's famous 1978 essay, "The Power of the Powerless." Havel's essay and the urging to "live in truth" and stop "living a lie" by conforming the state's ideology was a direct challenge to contemporaries.

Solidarity Rises

- ▶ From its founding in 1980, Solidarity expanded dramatically. Its distinctive graffiti-style logo, resembling red letters spray-painted on a shipyard wall, was a great success. At 36 years old, the electrician Lech Walesa became the group's leader. Unlike so many earlier revolutionary leaders, Walesa was proletarian, but he was also a Catholic and a patriotic Pole.
- ▶ Television news captured the events and the personalities. But the media tended to focus on Walesa and the male leaders of the movement, in the process neglecting the crucial roles of Walentynowicz and other women activists.
- ▶ In these heady days, the Solidarity movement's demands grew. Essentially they called for recognition of the right to have a civil society—that is, the zone of free association of individuals that is not within the control of the state.



- ▶ As the government gave in, the protestors seemed to be winning and constantly growing in numbers. By November, the union had 8 million members—a third of Polish adults. By 1981, its membership was more than 10 million! By contrast, the Polish Communist Party lost a third of its membership, while some 700,000 of its members enlisted in Solidarity
- ▶ In March 1981, Solidarity organized a general strike, of the kind that earlier revolutionaries had only dreamed about, shutting down the country for four whole hours.

Solidarity Troubles

- ▶ Then this success seemed to collapse. The Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact considered how to react to the increasingly embarrassing reality of Poland going its own way. Hardline Communist leaders insisted: if the Polish Communists could not get their act together, the Warsaw Pact needed to invade to impose order.
- ▶ In phone calls behind the scenes, the Polish government begged their own allies not to invade, saying they could handle it themselves. On December 13, 1981, the Polish general Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law.
- ▶ Army troops made waves of mass arrests, including 6,000 Solidarity leaders, Walesa and Walentynowicz among them. Overall this was done without massive violence, except in the coalmines of Katowice, where nine miners were killed by the army.
- ▶ But even the mass arrests and repression were unable to quell discontent. Solidarity continued underground, helped by printing and communication technology that the CIA smuggled in to bolster them.
- ▶ One fascinating way in which Solidarity showed that it was still alive and active was by the production of stamps—not official postage stamps, but illegal, unofficial versions that people would display or paste up as a sign of their loyalty to the mass organization.

- ▶ The repressive measures of the Communist government were often delegated to an elite group of thugs, not to the regular police. These were the notorious black-uniformed riot police known by their acronym, ZOMO. Their official name in Polish, *Zmotoryzowane Oddziały Milicji Obywatelskiej*, stood for “Motorized Units of the Citizens’ Militia,” but these citizens were famed for their brutality.
- ▶ Even though the ZOMO troops were feared and ostracized, an entire genre of jokes grew up around them, ridiculing their lack of intelligence and restraint. In one joke, two ZOMO men are on patrol, just five minutes before the official curfew begins.
 - When a man passes them, one of the ZOMO men shoots him dead in the street. His comrade says, “Why did you do that? There were still five minutes to go.”
 - The first replies, “Oh, I knew that guy—he lives 15 minutes from here, so there’s no way he would have made it.”
 - Another joke went like this: Why do ZOMO men always patrol in threes? The answer: The first can read, the second can write, and the third has to keep an eye on the two dangerous intellectuals.
- ▶ Joking aside, with such forceful repression, a certain grim stability set in, even if the regime could not recover its lost credibility. Many members of the Communist Party simply quit. The economic situation also continued to stagnate.

Closing Events

- ▶ Eventually, Lech Walesa was released from jail in November 1982, after almost a year in prison. The next year, he received the Nobel Peace Prize, but the government refused to let him out of the country to receive the award in person.
- ▶ Finally, martial law was lifted in 1983, but the standoff continued. Pope John Paul II visited Poland again that year, and 10 million Poles came

out to see him. Two years previously, an assassin had shot and critically wounded him in St. Peter's Square in Rome, but the Pope had survived. Many surmised that this attempt could be traced back to the secret police of the Soviet Union or its Eastern Bloc allies.

- Back in Warsaw in October 1984, a priest who spoke out against the government, Father Jerzy Popieluszko, was killed by secret police. Instead of shutting people up, however, this act of terror made him a martyr, whose grave was regarded as a holy site, and a symbol for reinvigorated protest.

READINGS

Havel, "Power of the Powerless."

Penn, *Solidarity's Secret*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did Solidarity's numbers grow so dramatically so fast?
- 2 Could Solidarity's model of dissent be transferred to other countries, or was it unique to Poland?

Toppling Idols: The Communist Collapse

LECTURE

19

The crackup of Communist regimes in both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union came with astonishing speed, in only two years, from 1989 to 1991. A key feature was the way in which that process gained velocity. Other key features which this lecture discusses include growing demands for change across Eastern Europe as well as mistakes from officials in power. In terms of time, this lecture doesn't cover a long stretch, but it was a momentous period nonetheless, one that reshaped the global stage.

The Velvet Revolution

- ▶ On November 17, 1989, at historic Wenceslas Square in Prague, frustrated youth marched in. The official Communist Youth organization had organized a march downtown to commemorate the Nazis' closing of Czech universities and suppression of student protests 50 years out. Planning the official march was a mistake, because students and other young people turned the event into a challenge to the government.



Student Protests in Prague, 1989

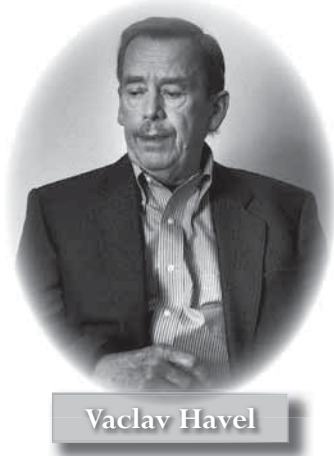


Wenceslas Square during the Velvet Revolution

- ▶ Protestors showed their hands and tried to hand flowers to the police, but then the beatings began. This police action was meant to be an exemplary show of force by the powers that be. That was a mistake, because the beating of the students set off an even bigger social reaction that would sweep away the government itself.
- ▶ First, students went on strike, then actors. Then calls went up for a general strike. In the days that followed, ever-larger crowds pressed in to Wenceslas Square. The government was thrown on the defensive. They eventually resigned.
- ▶ By the end of the year, Vaclav Havel, the playwright, former political prisoner, and now leader of the Civic Forum citizens' organization, was being sworn in as president of a newly liberated Czechoslovakia. This turn of events was later called the Velvet Revolution.

Demands for Change

- ▶ The Wenceslas Square event illustrates the two elements that were at work in the fall of Communism. On the one hand, there was a growing wave of popular demands for change, and on the other hand, a cascade of official mistakes.
- ▶ Unlike earlier revolutionaries, these people in opposition were marked by a commitment to achieving transformation without violence. Vaclav Havel's concept of "living in truth" suggested the power of a simple example and refusal to go along with the regime.
- ▶ East Europeans also had a growing desire to rejoin Europe, to do away with the false division of the continent. In fact, many thinkers at just this point refused the label of Eastern, which meant "under Soviet domination," and instead insisted on belonging to Central Europe (or East Central) or even Western Europe.
- ▶ Writers of many nationalities tried on the notion of a Central European identity: Adam Michnik of Poland, Gyorgy Konrad of Hungary, and Vaclav Havel and Milan Kundera of Czechoslovakia.
- ▶ Kundera's argument was especially impassioned. In 1983, he crafted an essay entitled "The Tragedy of Central Europe." Kundera's essay explored what Europe meant for many in the Communist bloc. It was a spiritual reality rather than a geographic expression, a culture of the West that was worth dying for.



- ▶ Then the global Cold War intervened. In its cycles of tension and relaxation, the Cold War intensified again in the 1980s, after the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan demanded by the Brezhnev Doctrine.

Reagan and Gorbachev

- ▶ The new U.S. president, Ronald Reagan, doubled American military spending. In 1984, he proposed space-based antimissile defenses—the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which the media soon dubbed “Star Wars.”
- ▶ The Soviet leadership, already spending a fifth of their GDP on military needs, now faced the prospect of an intensifying arms race. To inaugurate new policies, in 1985 the Soviet Politburo chose a younger man to lead the USSR: Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev.
- ▶ Gorbachev hoped to reform the Soviet Union by taking it back to its Leninist beginnings, before the impact of Stalin, and to make it run properly at last. The means to do this were the policies of glasnost and perestroika.
 - *Glasnost* meant openness, and Gorbachev hoped that opening the system to constructive criticism and suggestions would yield efficiency.
 - *Perestroika*, or restructuring, would recast how the system operated. This was to be accompanied not by full democracy, but by democratization, a measure of more democratic politics. But Gorbachev radically underestimated the resurgent force of nationalism in the Soviet Union’s inner and outer empires.

Mistakes

- ▶ Early in Gorbachev’s tenure, the unexpected happened. On April 26, 1986, one of the reactors of Ukraine’s Chernobyl nuclear power

plant exploded, tearing the roof off the complex. The blaze spewed a radioactive cloud into the air.

- ▶ Thirty workers died immediately, and others became ill later. An estimated five million people in the region were exposed to radiation, first among them the people of the now-abandoned city of Pripjat.
- ▶ This accident was followed by a deliberate mistake, which was the Soviet government choosing not to raise the alarm. Glasnost was little in evidence.
- ▶ Several days after the accident was the May 1 workers' holiday, celebrated with obligatory parades and marches. These went ahead throughout the region, instead of people sheltering in their homes. Party and government elites apparently did get early warning and hurried to evacuate their families.
- ▶ Only on May 5 were health warnings issued, targeting pregnant women and children, but by then the impact was already incalculable. Popular rage was considerable.
- ▶ That discontent grew exponentially in 1989. Because Gorbachev had signaled that Eastern European Communist parties should not expect Soviet invasions, the leaders of Poland and Hungary negotiated with the opposition.
- ▶ In Poland, the party leaders miscalculated badly. They legalized Solidarity and held elections; Solidarity went on to win almost every open slot in a popular landslide. Soon, Solidarity would form the government.
- ▶ Next, in Hungary, mass demonstrations led to freedom for independent parties and the move towards free elections. That spring, Hungary started taking down its border fences with Austria. East Germans, who could go on vacation to Hungary because it was in the Eastern bloc, used this opening in the Iron Curtain to flee in great numbers, precipitating a crisis in their home country.

- ▶ Meanwhile, East Germany had not liberalized, and found itself increasingly isolated. Peaceful demonstrations in Leipzig grew. In desperation, the East German Communist elite dropped hard-line leader Erich Honecker and promised reforms, to buy time.
- ▶ At this point, accident intervened as a force in history. The Communist government was working out new rules for freer travel, which would take effect sometime in the future. But no one told that to the official East German spokesman Gunter Schabowski, who mistakenly said the changes would take effect “Immediately.” Astonished East Berliners who saw this on TV went out to the border crossings to see what was really going on.
- ▶ Confusion reigned, and guards stood aside. Soon crowds were passing freely into West Berlin, climbing on the wall, smashing it with hammers or whatever was near to hand. Popular protest for fundamental change grew, and a dynamic that was unstoppable had developed. Less than a year after the Berlin Wall was brought down, Germany was reunited.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989



- ▶ In Bulgaria, demonstrations were quelled, but then the leader Todor Zhivkov was deposed by his own comrades. Then the ruling party agreed to free elections, giving up its monopoly on power. Similar events followed the next year in Albania.

One Violent Event

- ▶ While the revolutions of 1989 had been largely nonviolent, there was one exception: the toppling of the Ceausescu ruling family in Romania.
- ▶ Nicolea Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, were determined to hold onto power. In December 1989, Ceausescu ordered his army to fire on protestors in Timișoara, using the Tiananmen model of suppression.
- ▶ When protests spread to Bucharest, Ceausescu made a bad mistake. He went out to meet a carefully organized crowd, whose cheering was meant to demonstrate his power and legitimacy. But some started booing the leader. Ceausescu's face fell, and he shouted, "Be quiet!"
- ▶ This moment of challenge suddenly erupted into confused clashes. In the streets, rival factions of the regime traded gunshots, and some thousand people died in the crossfire. Ceausescu and his wife fled by helicopter, but they were tracked down and arrested, hastily put on trial and executed by firing squad.

The Soviet Union Collapses

- ▶ Over the next year and a half, the Soviet Union collapsed with stunning rapidity. It was gone by 1991, and was part of a global trend of decolonization in the 20th century. The impetus spread further than Gorbachev's team intended, to the Soviet Union itself. Glasnost was used to advance national independence. Elections to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies brought national independence movements to the fore.

- The demand for self-determination was dramatically illustrated at a mass event called the Baltic Way. On August 23, 1989, across the three Baltic countries, a mass protest was organized against the illegal 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact of 50 years before. In all, two million people held hands across about 370 miles in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.



- In the next year, popular independence movements with democratic support declared the reestablishment of independence—followed by other parts of the Soviet Union, and eventually even the Russian Republic itself, under Boris Yeltsin. The Baltics spearheaded that process, and their nonviolent approach was called “The Singing Revolution.”

- ▶ When the Baltic states moved towards independence, Gorbachev threatened consequences and blockade. In spite of this, on March 11, 1990, Lithuania declared independence. An uneasy state of affairs with contending claims held sway for the next year, until in January 1991, the Soviet government sent in the OMON special police.
- ▶ Soviet forces moved on the Vilnius TV tower. In a standoff, Soviet troops shot unarmed protestors. Other protestors were crushed under tanks, and 13 civilians were killed. The notion that somehow Gorbachev did not know about the event is not credible.
- ▶ Soon after, Soviet forces attacked the Latvian Interior Ministry and killed six. In both countries, people raced to surround their parliaments, as human shields. Further Soviet attacks were held back, but the damage to Gorbachev's repute and his recent Nobel Peace Prize award could not be undone.
- ▶ The tense situation endured until August, with no obvious solution in sight. Western powers disapproved of the violence, but also did not want to undermine Gorbachev's precarious position.
- ▶ On August 19, 1991, while Gorbachev was vacationing in Crimea on the Black Sea, members of his own government declared that they had seized power. The group called itself the State Committee of the State of Emergency. They were on a mission to save the Soviet Union from dissolution.
- ▶ Opposing the coup, from in front of the Russian parliament, Boris Yeltsin stood on a tank to rally democratic forces. The poorly organized coup quickly collapsed into disarray. In the aftermath, the Russian Communist party was shut down.
- ▶ On December 8, 1991, Russia's Yeltsin, Ukraine's leader Leonid Kravchuk, and Belarusian leader Stanislav Shushkevich met in Belarus in a hunting lodge in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park. In this setting, the three national leaders agreed on ending the Soviet Union and taking matters into their own hands.

- ▶ The treaty stated that the USSR ceased to exist. In its place, some parts of the Soviet Union joined a new Commonwealth of Independent States, including Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and later also Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- ▶ Gorbachev was in denial, and for a few days was the leader of a state that no longer existed. But on Christmas Day 1991, Gorbachev concluded business, resigning as president.

READINGS

Ash, *The Magic Lantern*.

Smidchens, *The Power of Song*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What do you consider the three main causes of the largely peaceful collapse of regimes in Eastern Europe?
- 2 Was economic failure or nationalism more important in the collapse of the Soviet Union?

The Turn: The Post-Soviet 1990s

LECTURE

20

After the fall of Communist regimes in 1989 to 1991, change was rapid. Countries and people had to learn how to function with entirely new economies. Another issue was how to deal with the past, as new access to records dug up painful secrets about the behavior of Communist regimes. Nations also had to grapple with their own identities: Some tried to learn to stand on their own, but one dissolved itself entirely. This lecture traces those happenings, then closes with a look at how the region avoided all-out ethnic violence.

Eastern Europe after Communism

- ▶ In German, the entire transition from Communism from 1989 onwards is called *die Wende*, “the turn,” as when a ship’s navigational course is altered. But Germans also speak of the phenomenon of the *Mauer im Kopf*, the “Wall inside one’s head,” which can persist even after the physical structure is gone.
- ▶ The memory of the Iron Curtain is so durable that it even shows up in the natural world. Twenty years after the barbed-wire border between what was then West Germany and Czechoslovakia was removed, red deer that live in this area never cross the former border, but still stay away.
- ▶ After the fall of Communism in 1991, Eastern Europeans faced the challenge of seeking to rejoin Europe. The economic dimension of moving from planned command economies to the free market was daunting.
- ▶ An exceptional case was that of East Germany, which joined the Federal Republic of Germany, and over the next 10 years received over \$900 billion in support from the West. By contrast, other Eastern European countries would have to make their own way.

- ▶ Debates surged about whether the best way forward was so-called shock therapy—a quick move to privatize and cut price controls and subsidies—or whether controls and subsidies should be maintained, in spite of the costs and inefficiencies, to cushion the transition.
- ▶ There was a lot of ground to make up. In 1989, Eastern European countries were estimated to have 49 percent of the average GDP per capita of Western Europe. Large out-migrations of especially younger Eastern Europeans set in. In a sense, this was actually a return to patterns of migration we noted in the late 19th century.
- ▶ The shift in economics could be disorienting and painful, especially among pensioners and workers in industries that were shuttered, bankrupted, or radically redeveloped. The travails of the Gdansk Shipyard (formerly the Lenin Shipyard), whose workers had launched the Solidarity movement, are a bitter case in point.
- ▶ Unfamiliarity with the new economics could also produce crises, as in Albania in 1997, when a series of Ponzi schemes promising vast returns imploded, wiping out the savings of every third person. Violent protests led to the toppling of the government and a wave of refugees headed for Italy across the Adriatic.

The Burden of History

- ▶ Another aspect of the transition Eastern European countries had to make involved dealing with the burden of the recent past. A newly liberated media, ranging from the responsible to the sensational, was full of new discoveries revealed as once-closed archives were opened.
- ▶ Soon before the collapse of the Soviet Union, after decades of officially denying that there had been a secret Nazi-Soviet Pact, a commission revealed that it had existed. But more searing and traumatic were the revelations about how the secret police forces had spied on societies in the Communist bloc.

- ▶ East Germany's Stasi, in its intense surveillance of its own citizens, generated some 121 miles of records. After 1992, German laws gave people the right to see their own files, perhaps to discover who had informed on them. Since then, about seven million people have read their files.
- ▶ Some have made devastating discoveries, like the East German dissident Vera Lengsfeld, who learned that her own husband had been reporting on her activity in the opposition.
- ▶ Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck directed a 2006 Oscar-winning film about Stasi surveillance: *The Lives of Others*. In this powerful and touching film, a Stasi official bugging a playwright undergoes a conversion because of what he hears, and begins opposing the state to protect his target. (Though this is a good story, there is no instance of this actually having happened.)
- ▶ Now an entire genre is growing of scholars reflecting on what their own files mean. One example is the British scholar Timothy Garton Ash's *The File*, about the records the Stasi kept on him while he visited East Germany. Another is by the anthropologist Katherine Verdery. Her book, *Secrets and Truths*, is an ethnographic interpretation of the files kept on her by the Romanian Securitate, testing the extent to which they could be regarded as a secret society.
- ▶ These scholars confront informants from their past, who either deny everything, repent, or make excuses. As a result of their close readings of their own files, we get a better sense of the inner workings of these regimes.
 - Among the most powerful promises the secret police offered potential collaborators was the chance to travel outside the country.
 - Internal spying was mostly a male activity, as only 10 percent of informants were women. Secret policing was often a family business, with children following their parent's careers.

- The Stasi had greater numbers of professional officers, while the Securitate made do with less, trying to enlist the cooperation of the wider society. The Securitate also saw themselves as actively shaping society, transforming it into the desired future state.
- ▶ Fierce debates took place in Eastern European societies about how to deal with the crimes of the recent past. Should there be *lustration*, as Czechs called it, meaning to eliminate from positions of authority those who enabled these acts under the previous regime? Should there be what Poles called a thick line drawn through all these matters? Or would the future be distorted by not dealing forthrightly with who had done what to whom?

Identities

- ▶ One of the most dynamic realities of the post-Communist transition was a recasting of identities in many parts of Eastern Europe. For instance, the case of the former East Germany was complex and fascinating. By

Hohenschonhausen Memorial

At Hohenschonhausen, a Stasi prison-turned-museum, present-day visitors can take a tour guided by a former dissident and prisoner.



uniting with the Federal Republic of Germany in the West, the territory in a sense exited from Eastern Europe, where it had belonged as a member of the Soviet bloc.

- ▶ But even before this German reunification, there were people voicing nostalgia for what East Germany had meant to them. In German, this was soon labeled *Ostalgie*, or “East nostalgia.”
- ▶ Some pointed out that East Germany had not only been about the Stasi and repression. They looked back to the ideological promises of the regime and wished they could be redeemed. However, claims that social life in East Germany had been marked by more human trust and authenticity crumpled in the face of cascading revelations of informants and betrayals.
- ▶ East Germany was not the only object of nostalgia in the region. Some looked back on life under Communism and focused on a sense of loss.
 - Former secret policemen could no longer play their dominant role in society.
 - Regular folks may have felt a loss of security, even as this ignored the reality that the economies of these states had seized up before the collapse.

New Borders

- ▶ The redrawing of borders also raised questions of identity. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, millions of ethnic Russians found themselves to be minorities. In some cases, they were more recent arrivals, in other cases, parts of communities with longer histories.
- ▶ In the Baltic states, new citizenship laws were restrictive. In Lithuania, by contrast, ethnic Russians were all given citizenship under the so-called zero option.

- ▶ In the post-Communist period, anxieties were stirred in the newly independent states when Russian diplomats spoke of the “near abroad”—that is, a zone that they implied was still part of their own post-Soviet space. That rhetoric was fiercely rejected.
- ▶ Some countries had long histories and old cultures, but little experience of political independence. These included Ukraine and Belarus, which emerged from the Soviet breakup and immediately became part of the successor organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, with Russia.
- ▶ Ukrainians, back to the 19th century and before, had been treated as a sub-nationality of the Great Russians. After attempts at Ukrainian independence in the turmoil of the First World War, Lenin’s Bolsheviks had reabsorbed the land. Stalin subjected the people to terror, but also insisted that Ukraine have its own seat in the new United Nations.
- ▶ Now, when Ukraine became independent in 1991, the experience would be brand new. A vexing tangle of problems involved dividing up Soviet military assets in the new country, especially nuclear missiles and the Black Sea fleet based in Sevastopol, Crimea.
- ▶ In December of 1994, Ukraine (which had been for three years the third largest nuclear power in the world) signed the Budapest Memorandum, agreeing to turn over the nuclear weapons to Russia. Ukraine received security assurances from Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.
- ▶ Ukraine’s smaller neighbor, Belarus, had similar challenges. The Belarusian national movement got started later than the Ukrainian, and remained weak compared to others in Eastern Europe. Now it, too, emerged from being a United Nations seat-holder following Soviet orders to independence.
- ▶ Additional burdens also weighed on Belarus. The Chernobyl disaster had contaminated about a fifth of the country’s area. In 1994, a

Communist functionary named Alexander Lukashenko was elected president, promising closer ties with Russia. In the next few years, he extended his term and instituted authoritarian rule, which made him Europe's last dictator. Belarus turned into a sort of time warp of unreformed economics and authoritarianism.



Alexander Lukashenko

- ▶ As these countries struggled to come into being, another Eastern European country simply dissolved. This was Czechoslovakia. Vaclav Havel had become president of the country after the Velvet Revolution. But in the next two years, tensions grew between Czechs and Slovaks, who had been welded into a union by Masaryk during the ordeal of the First World War.
- ▶ Slovaks had often felt that their position was unequal in the shared state. There had always been contrasts between the heavily industrialized Bohemia and the agricultural Slovak lands, as well as differing historical memories. As sentiment for separation grew, Havel resigned. But surprisingly, the separation was accomplished peacefully. The so-called Velvet Divorce came into effect on January 1, 1993.

Chaos Avoided

- ▶ With the fall of Communism, many experts and political scientists warned that Eastern Europe would become a general zone of conflict. Their argument was that nationalist passions had been kept in check during Communist rule, and these now would roar back to produce massive ethnic violence across the entire region.

- ▶ Fortunately, Eastern Europe did not collapse into generalized anarchy. The desire to rejoin Europe and gain security in the form of NATO membership played a powerful restraining role, even as finally achieving membership in the European Union or NATO proved a frustratingly long and drawn-out process.
- ▶ In his study *The Reconstruction of Nations*, Yale historian Timothy Snyder argues that a deliberate policy choice by Poland's diplomats was key as well. Renouncing questions of revising borders allowed Poland to play a decisive role in encouraging wider Eastern European integration into the west.
- ▶ That choice was not the only one on offer, but memory of the period between the World Wars, when Eastern European security was short-circuited by conflicts among neighbors, was clearly a cautionary tale and produced wise departures from earlier patterns.

READINGS

Ash, *The File*.

Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Do you think reading one's secret police file would prove cathartic or devastating, and why?
- 2 What do you consider the single most important legacy of the communist period?

Yugoslav Wars: Milosevic and Balkan Strife

LECTURE

21

In the year 1984, the city of Sarajevo readied for a happy event: the 1984 Winter Olympics, hosted by Yugoslavia. But just eight years later, Sarajevo became the epicenter of an Eastern European war of stunning violence and tragedy. From 1992 to 1995, conflict tore apart the country of Yugoslavia. This lecture traces Yugoslavia's and Sarajevo's hopeful origins, then describes how years of violence damaged the area. It closes with a look at how complicated healing the damage has been.

Yugoslavia's Background

- ▶ In the period between the World Wars, the kingdom of Yugoslavia (which meant "State of the South Slavs") was an experiment in uniting Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Slovenes. There were differences in historical memory, and religious differences, between the mostly Catholic Croats and Slovenes, the mostly Orthodox Serbs and Montenegrins, and the many Muslim Bosnians and Albanians. But Bosnia's Sarajevo was to showcase peaceful coexistence.
- ▶ However, with a Serbian dynasty ruling the state, many of the other nationalities felt neglected or slighted. During the Second World War, the kingdom broke down and bloodshed multiplied.
- ▶ Tito's Communist Yugoslavia aimed to remedy this situation by managing ethnic identities and submerging them in a shared socialist project. Tito himself was Slovenian and Croat, and his wife was a Serb.
- ▶ After the Second World War, Tito crafted a new federal structure, with six separate republics and two autonomous regions, all with their own presidents and parliaments. They included Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia. The autonomous



provinces were Vojvodina, with its predominantly Hungarian population, and Kosovo, predominantly Albanian. Relative economic prosperity came to Yugoslavia under Tito's stern leadership.

- ▶ Much of Yugoslavia's stability was identified with Tito, personally, as a charismatic figure steering the state. Then Tito died in 1980, after ruling for 37 years. The communist government's answer was the rather mysterious slogan: "After Tito: Tito!"
- ▶ What they meant to suggest was that even after Tito himself passed from the scene, his spirit would work on in the state. But this did not reckon with growing economic problems, inflation, and especially the collapse of other Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. As that collapse neared, an ideological vacuum opened in many Eastern European countries.

Milosevic

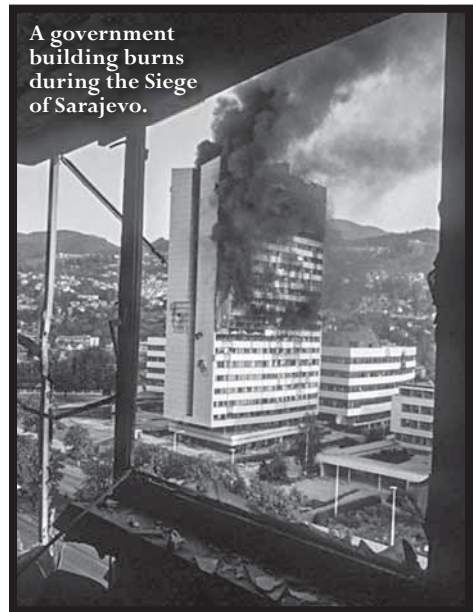
- ▶ A number of leaders in the separate Yugoslav republics converted their message from Communism to nationalism. In particular, the Serbian Communist leader Slobodan Milosevic maneuvered to make this ideological transition and present himself as a champion of his people.

- ▶ In 1987, Milosevic spoke at Kosovo's ancient battlefield, a holy site for Serbian identity, replete with shrines and monasteries. He was addressing a volatile situation there, because over the years, this site of the epic defeat at the hands of the Ottoman Turks had changed ethnically. Now the province was about 90 percent Albanian. That population was restive, demanding more autonomy and rights. Fears of Albanian separatism and overwhelming numbers made Serbians anxious. Milosevic announced to the Serbian audience, "No one has the right to beat you."
- ▶ Two years later, in 1989, on the 600th anniversary of the medieval battle, he returned to declare that the battle continued today. This proved a prime example of abuse of history to mobilize present-day grievances.
- ▶ Milosevic stripped Kosovo of its autonomy. Other nationalities grew anxious, and in 1991 Slovenia and Croatia seceded. After 10 days of fighting in the mountains of Slovenia, the Yugoslav People's Army withdrew, and the country had gained independence.

Croatia

- ▶ In Croatia, the scene proved different. The leader there, Franjo Tudjman, had also moved ideologically, from being a Communist partisan to a fierce nationalist. Some 600,000 Serbs living in Croatia grew worried at the prospect of his authoritarian rule.
- ▶ Croatia erupted into conflict, as militias organized, and barricades were set up across roads and bridges. With support from Milosevic and the Yugoslav People's Army, which was dominated by Serbs, a territory called the Republic of Serbian Krajina was set up.
- ▶ Now a cycle of ethnic cleansing began, as the front lines moved to and fro. Enemies sought to obliterate all traces of their former neighbors. The beautiful ancient cities of Vukovar and Dubrovnik were shelled, and masses of refugees were on the move, until the fronts stabilized in 1992.

- ▶ By this time, the fiercest conflict was raging in the mixed area of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Before war, the population was some 43 percent Muslim, 31 percent Serb, and 17 percent Croat, with the remainder made up of other small groups.
- ▶ In 1991, Muslim and Croat leaders had decided to move towards independence from the fragmenting Yugoslavia. As they did so, a Bosnian Serb leader and former psychiatrist, Radovan Karadzic, warned that they were leading “the Muslim people into possible annihilation.”
- ▶ With aid from the Yugoslav People’s Army, Karadzic’s forces seized territories and ethnically cleansed them, proclaiming the Republika Srpska (Bosnian Serb republic). Stages of ethnic cleansing became routine. Paramilitary units like the Serb Volunteer Guard, or Arkan’s Tigers, were proud of their actions.
- ▶ Routine happenings included mass killings; the burning of houses of worship; and incarceration in camps like Omarska, where mass rapes took place.
- ▶ The assault led to the siege of Sarajevo itself. Bosnian Serb paramilitaries positioned themselves above the city, on the surrounding heights, and shelled the urban center below. A city which once exemplified by ethnic mixture now endured a siege lasting 1,425 days.



International Response

- ▶ Within the city, the defenders resisted as best they could. Arms embargoes imposed by the United Nations affected the two sides unequally, because the Yugoslav People's Army provided weapons to the Bosnian Serbs. The embargo sealed their advantage, in the name of not escalating the conflict.
- ▶ United Nations peacekeeping forces were sent in to the area, but their mandate left the defenders helpless. The area around the town of Srebrenica was declared a U.N. "safe area," but Serb forces overran it in July 1995.
- ▶ Systematically, the paramilitaries under General Ratko Mladic separated out the Muslim men and boys from their families. The paramilitaries executed some 7,000 and dumped them into mass graves.
- ▶ Here a pattern we have observed before in Eastern European politics appeared again: partition. As this conflicted got started, two erstwhile foes had met secretly to negotiate. The leader of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, and Serbia's Milosevic agreed to partition Bosnia.
- ▶ International inaction was especially striking. For decades since the end of the Second World War, the world had firmly and ardently pledged, "never again." The United Nations in 1948 outlawed the crime of genocide. And yet here appeared concentration camps, mass graves, and genocide.
- ▶ Saying that the international community at large had to make the first move to solve the crisis was a way for outside powers to evade responsibility. European diplomats declared this a European problem but did not intervene.
- ▶ In this context, the stereotype of the Balkans as always violent also became an excuse. This was the assertion that what was going on was the inevitable outcome of so-called ancient hatreds. Yet amidst such totalizing judgments, Western leaders carefully avoided use of the word *genocide*, as it would trigger obligations and intervention.

- ▶ Croatian forces swept into areas the Serbs had taken in Krajina, in what was called Operation Storm. Ethnic cleansing commenced there on a massive scale. The Croatian forces assaulted and drove out many of the 600,000 Serbs. The populations Milosevic had championed now were driven from their homes.

Negotiations in Ohio

- ▶ After the massacre of Srebrenica and a succession of bloody shelling of Sarajevo, NATO forces intervened in Bosnia. This was the first time that this peacetime alliance had taken military action. In August 1995, NATO airstrikes against Bosnian Serb positions commenced. The result drove the warring sides to the bargaining table, in Dayton, Ohio.
- ▶ The eventual result—the Dayton Accords—produced a de facto partition of Bosnia and no return for refugees. The territory was split up into ethnically defined units, the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska (Bosnian Serb republic), which in the years to come would find it difficult to cooperate on reconstruction.

The Signing of the Dayton Accords



- ▶ The costs of the war had been enormous. In four years of fighting, some 200,000 died and two million were left homeless.

More Violence

- ▶ Yet there soon followed another crisis, in exactly the place where Milosevic's nationalist campaign had begun, Kosovo. Brutal government repression of the majority ethnic Albanians in Serbia's Kosovo province led to a guerrilla movement in which Albanian fighters killed Serbian policemen and officials. In summer of 1998, Serbian police actions of increasing ferocity took place, including killings in Racak in January 1999.
- ▶ In response, NATO forces (without UN approval) began bombing Yugoslav targets from March to June of 1999. NATO bombs struck Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. Infamously, the Chinese embassy was hit, in what was said to be a targeting mistake.
- ▶ As the bombing commenced, Milosevic sped up ethnic cleansing in Kosovo that was already underway—Operation Horseshoe. Television showed scenes of railcars jammed with Albanians being expelled. Nearly a million Kosovar refugees were forced from their homes. But the intensity of the bombing proved too much, and in June 1999, Yugoslavia surrendered, losing control of Kosovo.
- ▶ Kosovo now became essentially a United Nations protectorate. The Serbian minority in the area was subject to violence from Albanians, and numerous clashes took place. When Kosovo declared independence in 2008, it was recognized by a number of Western European countries and the United States, but did not get United Nations recognition. Serbia still claims it as part of its territory.
- ▶ Milosevic's career had proved disastrous, especially for those whom he claimed to be defending. Bitterness about his record grew. An opposition movement named *Otpor!* organized protests and mobilized public sentiment. The result was that Milosevic lost the presidential elections in 2000 to the opposition candidate, Vojislav Kostunica.

- ▶ The Yugoslav government arrested Milosevic in 2001 and turned him over to the Hague War Crimes Tribunal. There, he acted as his own attorney in long-drawn-out proceedings which ended with his sudden death in captivity in 2006, without a conviction.
- ▶ The Hague trials continued for years. In 2004, the tribunal officially declared that genocide had taken place in the war. In 2008, the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic was arrested in Belgrade and turned over to the court.

Post-War Routes

- ▶ Through much of the turmoil, Montenegro, bound to Serbia with shared culture and language and historical experience, had been (together with Serbia) all that remained of Tito's Yugoslavia. Then, in 2006, and without violence, Montenegro achieved independence and a separate existence.
- ▶ Tremendously complicated was the route of Macedonia. It had declared independence in 1991, and was able to go its own way without the violence of other parts of the imploding federation. Yet its very existence was contested from the start by a neighboring country, Greece.
- ▶ Greek leaders were upset at what they saw as the appropriation of a name from their own history. By claiming the lineage of Alexander the Great of Macedonia, the new country was immediately caught up in a naming dispute.
- ▶ The United Nations finally admitted the land under the title Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Yet Greek anxieties about the name led Greece to set up a trade embargo against Macedonia and veto NATO or EU membership for that country. Clearly, questions of identity remain salient to this day.
- ▶ Let's circle back to where we started: Sarajevo. Those who return to their hometown after years of living far away are still struck by the scars the city bears.

- As part of the partition negotiated to end the war, Sarajevo was divided, with neighborhoods broken down along ethnic lines. Also divided is the memory of Gavrilo Princip and his war-sparking act of 1914. Many Serbs see him as a hero who struggled for South Slav unification, while Muslims and Croats are ambivalent about this figure.

READINGS

Filipovic, *Zlata's Diary*.

Glenny, *The Balkans*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Could the breakup of Yugoslavia be prevented, or was it inevitable?
- 2 In the aftermath, how could reconciliation best be advanced?

The New Europe: Joining NATO and the EU

Movement is the central theme of this lecture, which focuses on Eastern Europe's entry into the European Union (EU) and NATO. During the Cold War, divisions had impeded travel and moving. Now, in place of immobility and the Iron Curtain, all Europe was in motion again. But with that mobility came worries: Despair came when people saw professionals leaving their countries to pursue work; some used xenophobia to try to keep new arrivals out; and longstanding resentments made entry into NATO and the EU tricky for some countries.

Fearing Mobility

- ▶ With mobility came many-sided fears. Given the lure of the west, Eastern Europeans seemed sometimes to be witnessing the emptying out of their homelands. Some despaired when they saw that the next wave of emigrants were highly trained professionals, seeking other opportunities abroad.
- ▶ About 1.5 million Poles left Poland after 2004. It has been estimated that one quarter of the Romanian workforce left the country. Similarly, nearly a million Lithuanians, especially younger ones, have emigrated since 1991, out of a population of just over three million.
- ▶ Most tragically, the Yugoslav wars also produced waves of refugees. In 2008, Serbia had some 320,000 refugees, displaced from their homes in former Yugoslavia or fleeing Kosovo.

NATO

- ▶ With Europe in motion, many Eastern European countries sought entry into NATO and the European Union as a way of escaping their status on the margins of a zone of security.

- ▶ NATO engaged in its first active warfare against former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. NATO also expanded into Eastern Europe. Newly independent countries clamored for admittance—they certainly felt a need for NATO.
- ▶ Eastern Europeans over centuries have found themselves wedged between great powers, in particular Germany and Russia. The fact that Germany was now embedded in the international structures of NATO and the EU seemed reassuring, restraining older patterns of an aggressive role.
- ▶ Similarly, Eastern European countries felt that NATO membership would give security against a renewed Russia, especially if it should turn away from a democratic and cooperative orientation back to earlier patterns.
- ▶ Eastern European countries applied for NATO membership. The first addition was the territory of East Germany, when Germany was reunified. Then, in 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic became NATO members. Several years later, in 2004, the Baltic states, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania joined. Croatia and Albania joined in 2009. Georgia also sought membership.
- ▶ NATO enlargement had its complexities.
 - A longstanding debate flared up about whether American negotiators had promised Gorbachev that there would be no NATO expansion in Eastern Europe. In 2006, when Ukraine was considering moving closer to NATO, protestors blockaded a visiting group of U.S. Marines, and hoisted a sign reading, “Invaders! Go to hell with your democracy!”
 - NATO has offered association with Serbia, but many Serbs remember the NATO bombers over Belgrade with lasting resentment.
 - Even with NATO membership, relations could be strained. Poland and the Czech Republic had agreed to an American-designed missile defense system. When the U.S. canceled that plan in 2009 as part of an attempted American “reset” of relations with Russia, those states were unhappy with how the decision had been made.

The European Union

- ▶ Eastern European countries also sought entry into the European Union. This proved slower than NATO acceptance, as the older EU states stressed the need for aspirants to coordinate economically and politically with EU standards and norms before membership.
- ▶ This was called *conditionality*—demands placed on countries wanting admittance, including a free market, a working democratic system, independent judiciary, and harmonizing national laws to European Union’s legal code.
- ▶ In 2004, the first round of eight Eastern countries joined: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Temporary restrictions were placed on the mobility of workers coming to the west, reflecting fears of the bogeyman “Polish plumber”—who, according to French politician Philippe de Villiers, was coming to rob French plumbers of their jobs—and others.
- ▶ In 2007, Romania and Bulgaria joined as well. Croatia joined in 2013. Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia applied for membership. Bosnia sought to be a potential candidate, and international authorities used that desire as a way of pressing for reforms in that state’s haggard economy.
- ▶ Entry into the EU also brought anxieties for Eastern Europeans, not just the hope of prosperity. They worried about bureaucracies in Brussels, joining the euro common currency, and intrusive regulation of local products by EU officials.
- ▶ In 2003, the Iraq crisis divided members of the European Union. Germany and France opposed the American attack on Iraq, while Eastern European countries lined up in support. French president Jacques Chirac drew resentment for his dismissive attitude of Eastern European concerns here.

- ▶ In the years that followed, embarrassing revelations showed that some Eastern European states had allowed the CIA to establish secret black site prisons on their territory.
- ▶ When EU finances were challenged by crises in Italy, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, many Eastern European leaders felt at least some satisfaction that these woes came from Western European members, not their own region.

The Roma

- ▶ Mobility also features in what the British journal *The Economist* calls Europe's biggest societal problem: the integration of the Roma people. They are estimated at more than 10 million throughout Europe. However, recent research reveals that their numbers are far larger than officially reported.
- ▶ Facing discrimination or distrust, many Roma avoid census-takers or refuse to register. In Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Slovakia, and Macedonia, the true numbers of Roma are estimated to be between 7 and 10 percent of the population. Demographically, the Roma minority is also growing in those countries, yet faces lack of integration in education and work.
- ▶ Roma have been targets for violence and open scorn. In 1995, four Roma were killed in a bomb attack in Austria's Burgenland. In 1999, a Czech town became notorious for a proposal to build a wall between the Roma settlement and the rest of the town. Roma who travel west, seeking work and opportunity, also encounter hostility. In France and Italy, authorities have bulldozed their settlements.

Returns

- ▶ With all this movement across the reconfigured Europe, a special category was that of returns. In the year 2000, the president of the Czech

Republic, Vaclav Havel, suggested the American secretary of state should come back to Prague in three years and run to be his successor. That woman was Madeleine Albright, who in fact had been born in Prague as Marie Jana Korbelova, the daughter of a Czechoslovakian diplomat. But she passed on Havel's suggestion.



Vaira Vike-Freiberga

- ▶ The idea of returning to become a president was not totally unrealistic in all cases. In fact, it happened in all three Baltic states.
 - Latvia's president from 1999–2007 was Vaira Vike-Freiberga. She had been born in Riga, then grew up in exile in Canada, and returned.
 - The Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus was born in Kaunas in 1926, left for a career in the U.S., then returned to Lithuania and served as president for two terms between 1998 and 2009.
 - Toomas Hendrik Ilves, president of Estonia beginning in 2006, was born to Estonian refugees and grew up in the U.S.
- ▶ Among those disappointed in their dreams of return was the claimant to the throne of Albania, Leka Zogu. He was son of King Zog, and went into exile as a baby when Italian invaders toppled his father.



Valdas Adamkus



Toomas Hendrik Ilves

- For the next 50 years he lived in exile in London, Egypt, and in Spain. An imposing man who stood almost seven feet tall, he longed to return to Albania.
- When unrest erupted there in 1997 after the collapse of the pyramid schemes, he returned to Tirana. A referendum was held that year on restoring the monarchy. It didn't pass. Leka Zogu reconciled himself to this fate, later dying in Tirana in 2011.
- ▶ Bulgaria's former king returned as well. He had come to the throne in 1943, as King Simeon II. Bulgaria changed to a republic in 1946; the royal family went to live in exile in Spain. The king returned to Bulgaria in 2001, with the last name Saxecoburggotski, and became prime minister until 2005. This was a remarkable reinvention, from monarch to democratic statesman.
- ▶ One of the most amazing such careers was that of the claimant to the throne of Austria-Hungary, which had collapsed at the end of the First World War.
 - Otto von Habsburg was the son of the last emperor, set to inherit a centuries-old empire. But instead of living in the shadows of past glory, he reinvented himself as a champion of European unity.
 - He spoke seven languages, including Latin. He liked to joke about his patrimony. When someone said to him that Austria and Hungary were playing a soccer match, he joked, "Really? Who are we playing against?" As the Cold War drew to a close, Otto von Habsburg tirelessly advanced ideas of a shared European identity around the idea of *Mitteleuropa*.

Success and Frozenness

- ▶ Former Communists often took turns in governmental responsibility in democratic transfers of power. A generation of opponents of Communism, like Walesa in Poland or Havel in the Czech Republic, held terms of office, and then rotated out. This was a success story.



- ▶ But not all areas were moving forward. A key example was Belarus, already damaged by the Chernobyl disaster. From 1996, that country seemed to be lost in a time warp, ruled by Europe's only remaining dictatorship. This was under Alexander Lukashenko, who proved to be a Stalinist by style, suppressing dissidents harshly.
- ▶ In 2005, the opposition proclaimed the start of a revolution, using jeans as their symbol. But it, too, was suppressed. In 2011, the opposition began a new tactic, coordinating on social media: Scores of people in cities would stop on the sidewalk, stand silently, and just start clapping. Even this led to arrests.

Russian Happenings

- ▶ A growing cause for concern in Eastern Europe has to do with Russia's move away from liberal democracy. From 1999, leadership in Russia passed to a former KGB lieutenant colonel Vladimir Putin, whose project for that state has been called *managed democracy*.
- ▶ Under Putin's quite popular leadership in his country, Russia has had tenser relations with some of its neighbors.

- In 2007, Estonian officials moved the bronze statue of a Soviet soldier from downtown Tallinn to a military cemetery nearby. This upset Russians in Estonia as well as the Russian government. An early example of cyberwar resulted: Russian computers shut down Estonian government websites and impeded work.
- Another conflict arose in August 2008, when Russian and Georgian forces clashed over breakaway enclaves backed by Russia. The stalemate there has also led to a frozen conflict.



- ▶ These instances may seem remote and obscure, but they speak to patterns that we have seen before in Eastern European history. Quite recently there was a tragedy that underlined the resonance of previous events, in a seemingly unbelievable fashion.
- ▶ In 2010, a delegation of top Polish government officials and dignitaries flew to Smolensk, in Russia, to attend ceremonies recalling the Katyn Massacre perpetrated by Stalin nearby back in 1940, 70 years previous.
- ▶ As it descended through foggy conditions while trying to land, the plane crashed. All 96 passengers and crew were killed, including Poland's president and many top officials. Among the dignitaries was a remarkable person we met earlier: Anna Walentynowicz, whose firing in 1980 led to the founding of the Solidarity trade union in Gdansk. This was a tragedy added on top of the tragedy and crime that the visit was meant to commemorate.

READINGS

Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*.

Drakulic, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did NATO expansion in Eastern Europe predate the European Union's expansion there?
- 2 Which bilateral relationships are most tense in Eastern Europe today, and which are the most positive, and why?

The Unfolding Ukraine-Russia Crisis

LECTURE

23

For decades after World War II, the violent changing of borders had been considered taboo, given the cascade of turmoil that could follow. With the tragic exception of the former Yugoslavia, the concept became unthinkable. For that reason, 2014 was in a sense a pivotal year, as Eastern Europe again saw borders altered by violence and the threat of force, as part of Ukraine (Crimea) was annexed by Russia. This lecture covers that violent, disruptive event, and notes several questions and issues brought up by it.

Background on Ukraine

- ▶ The tinder for the Ukraine conflict didn't spontaneously come into being in 2014. Rather, the background is a slow-motion identity crisis involving both Ukraine and Russia, and extending back over centuries.
- ▶ Scholars have noted that Russia without Ukraine is a country, but Russia with Ukraine is an empire. One question that arises is what sort of a Russia comes into being if it chooses an imperial identity with an appetite for expansion, or if on the contrary Russia chooses a self-sufficient identity that meshes with modern Europe.
- ▶ For Ukrainians, their identities are both linked to those of a past shared with Russia, but also with historic ties and affinities with the West. Ukraine is marked by a diversity of historical memories and orientations, and in that sense it's like a microcosm of larger Eastern European patterns.
- ▶ The tides of history carved out divides in Ukraine that still persist today. First Mongols came and receded, leaving Tartars; then Poland-Lithuania moved in, leaving their own imprint.
- ▶ Beyond the areas of foreign control lay the wild realm of the Ukrainian Cossacks. Wedged between the powers of Poland-Lithuania to the west

and Russia in the east, the Cossacks maintained a balance until they could do so no longer and had to seek an alliance.

- ▶ In 1654, the Cossack warlord Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who had led an uprising against Poland and sought to create an independent state, signed a treaty with Russia at Pereyaslav.
- ▶ Khmelnytsky received the Tsar's protection, along with Russian promises for Ukrainian autonomy. Instead of getting an ally who would defend their existence, the Cossacks discovered that they had a set of new rulers. In 1667, Poland and Russia came to an agreement for partition: They divided the contested Ukrainian lands along the Dnieper River.
- ▶ This partition was eventually made moot by the decline of one of the partners, Poland, and its division by other great powers. For Ukraine, the final end of Poland-Lithuania by 1795 meant that most Ukrainians were in the Russian Empire, although the proud province of Galicia in the west actually fell to Austrian rule under the Habsburgs.

The World Wars and Ukraine

- ▶ Between the World Wars, Ukrainians found themselves divided by borders, most living in the Soviet Union, others in Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. Inside the Soviet Union, Stalin cracked down



on Ukrainian cultural leaders and brought mass death with the Terror Famine, or Holodomor, of the 1930s.

- ▶ With the coming of the Second World War, some Ukrainian nationalists hoped that Nazi Germany might help their cause. Among their leaders was Stepan Bandera. At the start of the Second World War, they allied with Nazi Germany and some participated in the Nazi campaigns against the Jews. But as Ukrainian hopes for independence were frustrated, relations deteriorated and the Nazis imprisoned Bandera.
- ▶ Towards the end of the Second World War, borders and populations were shifted. Ukraine saw key examples of this. Stalin deported all the Crimean Tartars from their homes, expelling them overnight. Poland shifted westward, ethnic Poles were evicted from ancestral homes, and the city of Lwow became Lviv, in western Ukraine. By the end of this process, Ukraine's borders included most Ukrainians for the first time in centuries, but all of them under Moscow's rigid control.
- ▶ Within Ukraine, partisan warfare continued into the 1950s, as in the Baltics. The guerrilla leader Bandera fled to Germany, where he was hunted down by the KGB and assassinated in Munich in 1959.
- ▶ Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, brought a final change of borders. To celebrate the successes of the Soviet Union, and to mark an ancient event three centuries before, in 1954 Khrushchev officially gave Crimea to the republic of Ukraine.

Ukrainian Identity

- ▶ With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine became independent. However, the newly independent Ukraine revealed complexities. Along with Russia and Belarus, Ukraine was one of the founding members of the CIS, the Commonwealth of Independent States, to the east. Yet many Ukrainian leaders avowed that they wanted to be part of an Eastern European "return to Europe," which would mean orienting themselves to the west.

- ▶ Both the state and economy were in bad condition. The slow and fitful economic transition favored the well connected, so a class of powerful oligarchs rose up and founded political parties of their own.
- ▶ Corruption at multiple levels of government ate away at ordinary people's confidence in the system, and economic productivity lagged. Ukraine found itself hugely dependent on Russia for energy supplies, some 75 percent of its gas and 80 percent of its oil. To overcome its troubles, Ukraine sought international financial aid, and giving up its nuclear stockpile left over from the Soviet era in 1994 helped win them some assistance.

Viktor Yushchenko

- ▶ Disappointment with insider politics as usual produced a popular movement called the Orange Revolution in 2004. The Ukrainian opposition to the government was led by Viktor Yushchenko.
- ▶ On September 5, 2004, Yushchenko became desperately ill after dinner. Medical tests showed dioxin poisoning symptoms, and the symptoms were visible in his bloated, pockmarked face.
- ▶ Who had done it? Several suspects fled to Russia and were not questioned. Was the intention to kill him outright? Or “merely” to disfigure him in his outward appearance and thus scuttle his chances for election? Whatever the case, it backfired.
- ▶ When the government announced fraudulent election returns, people took the streets. They chose the vivid color orange to rally people to their cause and kept protesting even in the bitter winter cold of the streets. After 17 days, the protestors won, and in a new election, Yushchenko became president.
- ▶ Yet what followed was a disappointment. Rather than making a common cause, those who championed reform instead got bogged down in

struggles against one another. There was little sense of progress. Capitalizing on people's frustration, radical Ukrainian nationalist groups started to gain more support.

Viktor Yanukovych

- ▶ In 2010, Viktor Yanukovych was elected president, with most of his support in the eastern regions. He also had the support of Russia's leader, Vladimir Putin.

- ▶ At the end of 2013, when Yanukovych negotiated and then bizarrely refused to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union, protests erupted again in Kiev, Lviv, and other cities. These protests in coldest winter came to be called the Euromaidan, or "Euro Square."



- ▶ Government forces tried to quell the protests. Dozens of protestors were killed. But by February 2014, President Yanukovych felt his power crumbling and fled, finding refuge in Russia.
- ▶ There followed strange scenes as hundreds of thousands of protestors wandered through Yanukovych's vast estate near Kiev, which showcased the wealth of an oligarch at its most ostentatious.

Forces Move In

- ▶ Putin, who had been Yanukovych's patron, declared his ouster and the change of government illegitimate. Russian forces moved into Crimea.

At first, the Russian government denied that it had sent troops into the region, which had an ethnic Russian majority. The troops bore no insignia, but they did wear masks. Russia then annexed Crimea officially, over international protests.

- ▶ Later, in March 2015, Putin proudly admitted openly what his government had denied: Russian involvement was not a spontaneous response to calls for help, but a plan, and the annexation was ordered weeks before the referendum was staged under the watchful eyes of gunmen.
- ▶ Next, heavily armed rebels started seizing territories in eastern Ukraine, along the Russian border, and declaring mini republics under their control. Russian media referred to the territories by a revived an old name: *Novorossiya*, or New Russia, the name given to annexed lands by Catherine the Great.
- ▶ In July 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was shot down as it crossed over Eastern Ukraine, near the border with Russia. All 298 people on board perished. Rebels at first did not allow international investigators to the crash site.
- ▶ Russian officials insisted that none of their soldiers were in Ukraine, but when Russian prisoners were taken, it was announced that they were soldiers on vacation who could do what they wished in their free time. The Russian government went on to declare that the deaths of Russian soldiers during peacetime were a state secret, which opened to prosecution those who reported on funerals back in Russia of men killed in Ukraine.
- ▶ Communal conflict also blazed up in areas with mixed populations. A dreadful incident took place the famed port city of Odessa, where in May 2014, pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian protestors clashed. This led to the deaths of 42, most of them of the pro-Russian group. The Ukrainian government promised a full investigation, but this was badly managed, so the event remains unclear.

- ▶ By 2015, the fighting had taken some 5,000 lives and had turned upwards of a million people into refugees. The question presented itself, whether one wanted it to or not: Is this the new normal in Europe?
- ▶ Back in 2008, Vladimir Putin reportedly told a startled President George W. Bush during a summit meeting that Ukraine is not really a country. As the crisis unfolded in 2014, the president of the European Commission called Putin in August to seek a resolution. His reported reply was that he could occupy Kiev in two weeks.
- ▶ The background to this perspective was Putin's declaration that the Soviet Union's collapse was the greatest tragedy of the 20th century. The cultural and educational policies of Putin's regime have praised the Soviet Union, and revived its symbolism and vocabulary. The biting irony here is that, in fact, Russians had been victimized by that system longest.
- ▶ Yet Putin's policies led to a surge in his popularity back home. A deliberate manipulation of news and media sought to sway public opinion in Russia and abroad.
- ▶ Putin's government argued that its intervention was motivated only by concerns for order in Ukraine, which had become a failed state. Here were fascinating echoes from the late 1700s, when the Great Powers had justified carving up the state of Poland-Lithuania with precisely the same claims.
- ▶ As Western leaders considered how to react, they repeatedly stated how surprised they were, and suggested that Putin must not know that we are, after all, in the 21st century. Such repeated observations are troubling, because they suggest the comforting but false notion that ages or centuries have their own logic and spirit that move toward peace.

READINGS

Magocsi, *Ukraine*.

Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the most serious internal challenge Ukraine faces?
- 2 In general, and in the particular case of Ukraine, are linguistic or religious divides more fundamental, and why?

Eastern Europe at the Crossroads

LECTURE

24

In our final lecture, we'll survey where Eastern Europe stands today, and what its future hopes, prospects, challenges, and perils are. In many ways, Eastern Europe is at a crossroads. This lecture revisits the four early themes that guided this course. It then takes a look at Eastern Europe at several different crossroads, including in the realms of politics, economics, and historical memory and identity. The lecture closes with a tour back through some of the historic sites of Eastern Europe, and a hopeful look at what they can teach us.

Revisiting the Four Themes

- After a survey of hundreds of years, we can circle back to ask whether Eastern Europe still exists today, focusing on the four themes that define the region.



- ▶ Regarding the first of our themes, that essential historical attribute of diversity still marks Eastern Europe. But we need then add the important qualifier and reminder that we saw devastating projects that aimed to reduce that diversity.
 - The genocide against the Jews of Eastern Europe during the Second World War was a great crime and destroyed a key element that had shaped the region's experience.
 - Shortly after, and also related to Hitler's criminal plans, the expulsion of ethnic Germans removed a constituent element from ancestral homes.
 - Stalinist regimes aimed to reduce diversity to one party line and the creation of a new uniform man and woman.
 - In our times, historians have declared, we have seen a "return to diversity" in Eastern Europe, including the return of older historical patterns, for better or worse, that had been submerged for decades during the Cold War.
- ▶ Our second key theme concerned Eastern Europe as a contested space. Invasions, partitions, and conflicts between peoples produced both tragedies and hard lessons about survival and strategies for enduring.
 - Today, anxieties center on the intentions of Putin's regime, and have led to an arms buildup in the region. We have noted worrying potential flashpoints. Yet in general, Eastern Europe now is freer, more secure, and more integrated into Europe.
- ▶ Our third and fourth themes were on the one hand those contrasts between Eastern Europe and the West and, at the same time, the striking linkages with the West and the world. Eastern European distinctiveness has not disappeared, but the project of "return to Europe" has been ongoing for a generation now, and this has produced profound changes.

Taking Stock of Eastern Europe: Economics

- ▶ In economics, Poland has set an astonishing record. When Europe as a whole slumped during the 2008 economic crisis, Poland surged ahead, and in 2009 was the only country in Europe with positive economic growth.
- ▶ The Baltics also experienced double-digit growth during the first decade of the 20th century. Some of this was due to cutting-edge technological advances. A very popular software application that allows virtual communication, Skype, was created in Estonia.
- ▶ In general, back in 1989, East Central European countries were estimated to be at 49 percent of per capital GDP in Western Europe. By 2014, they were estimated to be at 65 percent of GDP. That clearly means there is more ground to be gained, but the change is significant.
- ▶ But prosperity was not the rule. Among many other cases, growth in Ukraine lagged desperately, and undercut faith in government there. To take another case, Bosnia remains poor.

Taking Stock of Eastern Europe: Politics

- ▶ In politics, we have seen both turmoil and a positive record of peaceful transfers of power through elections, as well as a vigorous culture of protest. Within the European Union, Eastern Europe's new members have not been shy about expressing their perspective—as it should be, given long historical periods without a voice.
- ▶ In general, domestically, a generational change has been underway, as dissidents have passed from the scene. Vaclav Havel died in 2011. The leader of Solidarity, Lech Walesa, largely withdrew from the political arena. Experts on the region keep close watch for signs of a return of authoritarianism.

- ▶ In Hungary, the government of Viktor Orbán and his ruling party Fidesz have been controversial. Its proposed media restrictions met with mass protests in Budapest.
- ▶ Orbán's government also passed a so-called status law giving citizenship to ethnic Hungarians abroad, which stirred worries among its neighbors, in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. Nationalists chanted, "No, no, never!" in response to the treaty.

Taking Stock of Eastern Europe: Historical Memory

- ▶ In the crossroads of historical memory, surprises can be noted on a regular basis. Most importantly, a generation of young Eastern European historians has been active, doing new and important research, especially on the past interactions of the ethnic groups of the region. In 2014 in Warsaw, the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews was opened, its theme the millennium-long relationship between Poles and Jews.
- ▶ A powerful voice in terms of historical memory is the Romanian-German author Herta Müller, winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Literature. Her book *Herztier*, translated into English as *The Land of the Green Plums*, and her other works deal with the realities of a society under the pressure of a despotic state and its secret police, the Securitate.
- ▶ In 2014, a new president was elected in Romania. Hailing from Transylvania and bringing a message of battling against the plague of corruption, the new president is an ethnic German, Klaus Iohannis. The very fact of his popularity and election is a startling hint that a past of ethnic friction does not necessarily determine the future.
- ▶ The relationship between Poland and Germany, repeatedly venomous in the past, is now the best it has ever been. After generations of fraught and sometimes bloody relations, Poland now seeks to bring Ukraine closer to the rest of Europe and the West. The European Union has partnership agreements with Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova—where will these overtures lead?

- ▶ In all this, Germany's role as the biggest economy in the EU and one of the driving powers of the European project is vital. Taking office in 2005, the Christian Democratic chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, brought to that post what we have to call extensive Eastern European experience, as she grew up in the Eastern Bloc.
- ▶ Among the issues that the European Union has to wrestle with, with Germany playing a very important leading role, is dependence on Russian gas and oil, as a pressure point in international relations.
- ▶ In all, Eastern Europe still does exist, in spite of the divergent paths taken by different countries. It still is a realm with a shared recent past, hard lessons and cautionary tales, and a resurgent voice. This is summed up in a frequently invoked slogan of the region, "Nothing about us without us," asserting a right to self-determination.

Voices from the Past

- ▶ Other voices from the past demand our attention in the present. The Jewish historian Simon Dubnow urged the imperative of writing and recording the past, never to forget.
- ▶ In 1918, when the new president of Czechoslovakia, Tomas Masaryk, returned from exile after years of working for his country, he gave a sober warning: "Much work is still to be done," and that in fact it might be harder work ahead than what already had been done. Masaryk urged the need to "make ourselves perfect" in that work, because he saw it is deeply meaningful and worthwhile striving.
- ▶ A later president of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, called our attention to the power of the powerless, the immense consequences that could follow from a simple but radical act: refusing to live the lie and instead choosing to live in truth.
- ▶ A good deal less serious were the ramblings of Jaroslav Hasek's gift to world comic literature, *The Good Soldier Svejk*. Svejk used his pretended

imbecility to cheerfully undermine the empire that loomed above him and claimed to be all-powerful.

- ▶ Today, a figure somehow related to Svejk also hovers in a less familiar corner of world literature. This is the creation of the Lithuanian poet Marcelijus Martinaitis, a character called Kukutis. A survivor and trickster, he does not even acknowledge the Soviet state, much less obey its many rules.

Taking a Visit

- ▶ The very best way to take the measure of these changes is to visit yourself. If we were suddenly transported to this changing Eastern Europe today, consider the scenes we could see and how present history would be to us, even in a period of striking and continuing transition.
- ▶ In Budapest, we walk through bustling downtown streets, but near the subway stations, farmers still offer bright red paprika to buy. Close by, proud salespeople will pour you a glass of Tokaji, the once famous Hungarian sweet wine that the world needs to rediscover.
- ▶ Next we could stroll through downtown Berlin, right across from where the notorious and deadly Berlin Wall once ran. Now signs of it are hard to detect. As we make our way through the crowds, we hear different Eastern European languages, and it dawns on us how much this is a return to the ways of the 19th century, when this was a crossroads of Eastern Europe.
- ▶ In Warsaw, we marvel at the reconstructed old town, and think how that very reconstruction is an eloquent and poignant commentary on how much history this capital city has witnessed.
- ▶ North of there, on Poland's Baltic coast, we can visit the hulking redbrick fortress of Malbork, which the original owners, the German crusader knights, called Marienburg. This fortress is so big that its footprint allows it to claim to be the largest castle in the world.



Malbork Castle

- ▶ But that assertion is actually contested by another structure to the south, in the Czech Republic. Above the city of Prague rises the Prague Castle, home of the kings of Bohemia, and the Czechs declare that it in fact is the largest old castle in the world.
- ▶ We can approach Estonia's capital, Tallinn, by sea. In that case, we first experience the glittering new city, modern and sleek. Then we pass to the old city, with its hefty defensive towers, medieval churches, and then Toompea Castle, next to the Russian Orthodox cathedral.
- ▶ In Riga, Latvia, we see the House of the Blackheads, a guild headquarters built by the Hanse trading network back in the 1300s, destroyed in the Second World War and rebuilt from 1995 to 1999.
- ▶ In Lithuania, we wind our way through the streets of Vilnius, where in a sense *multiple* cities have coexisted in the same spot: the Jerusalem of the North of the Litvaks; Wilno, the jewel in the Polish crown; and a center of national legends for Lithuanians. Indeed, you can visit the rebuilt castle of the grand dukes.



House of the Blackheads

- ▶ To the south, in Bratislava in Slovakia, we climb the steps of the huge white castle that sits above the Danube River. The castle above Bratislava too is reconstructed; it had fallen into ruins and was rebuilt after the Second World War.
- ▶ There is much else for us to see: the ancient citadel in Belgrade, Serbia, the rose fields of Bulgaria, the acres of wine of Moldova. All of these, and many more, are crossroads, too.
- ▶ In all these places we just surveyed, we can conclude that Eastern Europe still exists today as a place marked by shared and overlapping history. Throughout the region, in many cases monuments of the past are carefully tended, or—as we saw in many cases—reconstructed with great care and expense.
- ▶ This is a vivid testimony to how present history remains in Eastern Europe, how important it is to identity and memory. When truly understood in all its human depth, the past does not doom to repetition, but may give hints of better futures.

READINGS

Lucas, *Deception*.

Martinaitis, *The Ballads of Kukutis*.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What older historical patterns from the first parts of the course do you still see at work in Eastern Europe today?
- 2 What recent media report on Eastern Europe seems to you most encouraging or most worrying at present, and why?

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